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PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

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## **PRAYING FOR THE DEAD**





# PRAYING FOR THE DEAD

AN HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE PRACTICE

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R. J. EDMUND BOGGIS, B.D.

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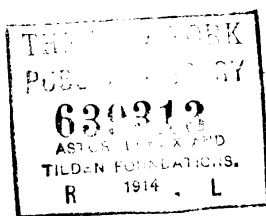
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DEDICATED  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
MY FATHER  
THOMAS BOGGIS

AND MY MOTHER  
FRANCES SARAH BOGGIS.

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The Lord grant unto them to find mercy of the Lord in that day



MARY WARR  
CLUB  
WARR

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# PRAYING FOR THE DEAD.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE ANTIQUITY AND EXTENT OF THE PRACTICE OF PRAYING FOR THE DEAD.

THERE are certain fundamental religious principles or tenets that have been so generally accepted by mankind that we may reckon them as part of natural religion, unless indeed we regard them as having been handed down from a primæval revelation given by God to men.

The first of these is the conception of the existence of a supreme Being—whether he be called God or Providence, or Fate or Destiny ; one who is recognised as the ruler of all, and also generally viewed as the maker of all ; to whom man is subject, so that his very existence depends on him ; and one who can direct and mould the fate of every creature on earth.

A second is the belief that a man can indirectly

B

affect or influence his fellow-creatures by making an appeal to this supreme Being—an appeal that commonly finds expression in the form of sacrifice or prayer, which somehow reaches the Deity, even though his dwelling-place may be very far away. This is a conviction that has been held not only by believers in a personal God, such as Jews and Zoroastrians and Christians and Moham-medans, but even by those who are swayed by the basest superstitions, such as the practice of Obeah, and the employment of incantations or overlooking. And though logically it ought not to be the case, yet the most extreme predestinarians, such as the Moslems and the Calvinists, share this belief and commonly practise intercession.

There is a third principle or tenet, to be ranked with the others, viz., the conviction that death does not involve extinction, but that there is a continuance of man's personal existence beyond the grave, so that the life that is lived here does not comprise the whole of man's being.

Now from all this it may reasonably be deduced—as indeed has generally been done—that man's condition after death is to some degree sentient, that he is not altogether in a state of torpor or somnolence or insensibility, that he is able to exercise some at least of his faculties; and also

that the great Being, who exercised power over him while on earth, is still his supreme ruler when he has passed through the gate of death. And furthermore many religionists have proceeded one step further, and have held the opinion that as sacrifices and prayers may avail for others while alive, so they may still be efficacious even when this life is over, inasmuch as their individuality is not destroyed by death, nor are they removed from the domain of the supreme Being.

But this last tenet was not adopted by all. It was accepted indeed by the ancient Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Zoroastrians, the later Jews, and the Mohammedans; but it finds no place, or very little, in the religions or philosophies of further Asia—Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taouism; and the old classical nations of Europe, the Greeks and the Romans, scrupulously careful as they were in showing their affection or reverence for their departed, were accustomed rather to offer sacrifices directly to them, than to the gods on their behalf, so that among them the idea of praying for the dead was never really fully developed.

The statement made above concerning the great religions of the world needs proof or illustration, and therefore we bring together some



quotations from original authorities or reliable historians in support of what has been said, omitting however the case of the Jews, which will be dealt with fully in a later chapter.

We treat first of ancient Egypt. There is little doubt that in the earliest ages the priest pronounced certain formulæ or prayers over the dead body when it was laid in the tomb, accompanying the recital of the words with the performance of certain ceremonies. The exact phrasing of these formulæ has not been preserved, but they formed the foundation of *The Book of the Dead* of later times, and were evidently addressed to the god or gods of the community on behalf of the departed, and contained petitions for his welfare in the world beyond the grave. But though the Egyptians had very definite ideas as to the reality of a future existence, they had formulated few details about it, and had no knowledge as to where or how it was to be enjoyed. Nor had they any conception of sin, as we understand it. With them wrong consisted in the failure to perform religious duties, and could be atoned for by compensation, the compensation taking away all effects of the wrongdoing, so that there remained nothing of what we should describe as the stain of sin. There was therefore no need or scope for prayers in this respect.

Nor would they pray for any spiritual progress of the departed in the after-world, for that was an idea that they did not hold. Thus the prayers that they offered for the departed were chiefly concerned with the obtaining of material blessings for the departed, such blessings as he would most have desired for himself during his earthly life. These however are very definite and direct prayers for the dead, and some of them may fittingly be quoted here.

One instance is supplied by Dr. E. A. Wallis Budge in his *Egyptian Reading Book*.<sup>1</sup> It occurs in a funeral text, the stelæ of Nekht-Amsu of the eighteenth dynasty, who is represented as speaking thus :—

“O [all] ye who live upon the earth, who will live for eternity and for ever and for aye, O ye priests and readers of Osiris, O every one learned in divine tradition, when ye enter my tomb and pass through it, recite ye sacred words by the side of [this] my sepulchral tablet, and make ye mention of my name, without fail, in the presence of the lords of right and truth. And your God shall shew favour unto you, and ye shall hand on your dignities to your children after ye have lived to a ripe old age, provided that ye say :—‘ May Osiris grant a royal oblation to the overseer of works in the Temple of Ai ; and may

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 137, 38.

the tomb of Nekht-Amsu, the venerable one, the prince, the first prophet of Amsu and Isis, abide for ever in the abode of eternity.' ”

Further on the epitaph continues :—

“ May he (i.e. Nekht-Amsu) breathe the wind which bloweth from the horizon—the full blast of the north wind which cometh [i.e. bloweth] on both sides ; may his name be proclaimed ; may [his] hand be stretched out over oblations, and provisions, and sepulchral offerings, when he is invoked ; may he receive water at the two hands of the ka priest ; may he gain possession of bread and beer from the table at which his double is pleased [to appear] ; may he eat meat at the table of the god Neb-er-tcher, at the table of the lords of eternity ; may pure meat and drink be given to him from the meat and drink of Un-nefer ; may he travel along in the boat of the underworld to the lands of the Sekhet-Aaru ; may he open up the ways and pass along the roads ; may he follow the god Seker to Re-stau ; may he be not turned back at the door of the Tuat ; may he take his fill there of wine and milk, and receive ointment, and unguent, and eye-paint [which] rejoiceth the heart, and clothing and linen garments—he the double of the overseer of the double store-house of all the gods in Taqahti and of Amsu in Khenti, the first prophet of Amsu and Isis in Apu (Panopolis), Nekht-Amsu, triumphant, who offereth divine offerings to the

gods, and sepulchral meals to the spiritual beings of light for the king of the North and South, Rakheperu-ari-Maat, life, health and strength. May he endure like heaven, may he renew himself like Amsu. And may prayers be made for his salvation for millions of years to all the gods by the real royal relative who loveth him."

The following prayers are selected from *The Book of the Dead*, "The Chapters of coming forth by Day" (translated by Dr. Budge).

"The chapter of making the spiritual body to enter into the underworld on the day of the funeral, when these words are to be said:—'Homage to thee, O thou that dwellest in Set-Tchesert of Amentet: Osiris, the royal scribe Nekhtu-Amen, victorious, knoweth thee, and he knoweth thy name. Deliver thou him from the worms which are in Re-stau. . . . Let this be the first bidding of Osiris Neb-er-tcher who keepeth hidden his body. May he give air and escape from the terrible one who dwelleth in the Bight of the Stream of Amentet, and may he decree the actions of him that is rising up. Let him pass on unto him whose throne is within the darkness, who giveth glory in Re-stau.'"<sup>1</sup>

"The Chapter of coming forth by day, and of living after death. Saith Osiris Ani, victorious:—. . . 'Grant that this Osiris Ani may come forth among

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 1B, p. 23.

those multitudes which are outside ; and let him be established as a dweller among the denizens of heaven ; and let the underworld be opened unto him' . . . " <sup>1</sup> " May those who build up grant that Osiris . . . [space intended for the name of the deceased] shall arrive happily in the Hall of Double Truth." " May the gods who are in the following of Osiris grant that the body of Osiris . . . shall rest along with his säh." " May Sherem not allow any evil thing to come to Osiris . . . in the underworld." " May the souls of the gods who have come into being in the members of Osiris . . . grant that he shall have peace." <sup>2</sup>

We are told by Dr. Alfred Wiedemann that prayers of this kind were inscribed on the funerary stelæ in order that passers-by might repeat them for the benefit of the dead. These inscriptions vary but little. The prayer on the funerary tablet of Khemnekht (now in the Agram Museum) dates from the thirteenth dynasty, and runs as follows :—

" O every scribe, every Kherheb (lector, priestly reciter), all ye who pass by this stele, who love and honour your gods, and would have your offices to flourish (shine) for your children, say ye :—' Let royal offerings be brought unto Osiris for the Ka of the priest Khemnekht.' " <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 168, sections 1, 5 ; 2, 2 ; 2, 8 ; 3, 6 ; pp. 298–310.

<sup>3</sup> *The Ancient Egyptian Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul*, translated, p. 19.

For the belief and practice of the Babylonians and the Assyrians we may refer to *Babylonian Religion and Mythology* by L. W. King.<sup>1</sup> From him we learn that these peoples thought that the earth was a hemisphere, the circular surface being the home of mankind; and that the interior, known as Arallu, was the abode of the departed—a dark and gloomy region, where good and bad shared the same miserable and joyless fate. Throughout the whole course of their history they were in the habit of burying and not burning their dead, and “they imagined that burial, and offerings made at the tomb, would ameliorate the lot of the departed, and they were usually scrupulous in performing all rites which could possibly benefit the dead.”<sup>2</sup> He also mentions “the offering up of a sacrifice for a newly deceased king of Assyria.”<sup>3</sup>

As for the Zoroastrians, Dr. E. C. Bissell in his *Apocrypha*<sup>4</sup> declares that by them “prayers were offered for the dead, by which means, it was thought, they were greatly aided in their difficult passage to everlasting blessedness. On certain days of the year the souls of the dead were thought to revisit the earth, and at such times two forms of petition

<sup>1</sup> *Books on Egypt and Chaldæa*, vol. iv.

<sup>2</sup> P. 52.

<sup>3</sup> P. 12.

<sup>4</sup> *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, Dr. J. P. Lange.

were repeated for them and by each person twelve hundred times. Especially at these periods was the hope strong of being able through prayers and good deeds to release them from the retributive pains of the lower world." And he quotes from Dr. Döllinger<sup>1</sup> this statement :—" For departed relatives continual prayers were offered up, and for sinners twice as many as for the pure. These prayers won for the soul—as was supposed—the protection of the heavenly spirits, particularly of Serosh against Ahriman." <sup>2</sup>

" According to the teaching of Muhammad," says Hughes in his *Dictionary of Islam*, " it is the duty of all true Muslims to pray for the dead." As authorities he cites Durru'l-Mukhtar<sup>3</sup> and Mishkat,<sup>4</sup> and he gives the following quotations :— (1) " God most certainly exalts the degree of a virtuous servant in Paradise, and the virtuous servant says, ' O my Lord, from whence is this exalted degree for me ? ' and God says, ' It is on account of your children asking pardon for you.' " (2) " The Prophet passed by graves in al-Madinah, and turned his face towards them, and said, ' Peace be to you, O inhabitants of the graves ! may God forgive us and you.' " (3) " A dead person

<sup>1</sup> *Judenthum*, p. 374.

<sup>3</sup> P. 135.

<sup>2</sup> P. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Book V, chap. III,

in the grave is like one over his head in water, who calls to somebody to take him by the hand. For he has hope that his father or mother, or his brother, or his friend will pray for him. For when the prayer reaches the dead person, it is more esteemed by him than the whole world, and all that is in it ; and verily God most certainly gives to the dead, on account of the prayers of the people of the earth, rewards like mountains, for verily the offerings of the living for the dead are asking forgiveness for them." The *Koran* itself even seems to supply an instance of prayer for the departed, for Noah is introduced as saying, "O my God, forgive me and my parents," the reference being to the time when the Flood was to come upon the world.<sup>1</sup>

It is thus manifest that in these great world-religions prayer for the dead was recognised as a fully established practice. With the others however it was not so. It is true that occasional traces or suggestions of such devotions do occur in them, such as the building of shrines in honour of Yama, the Hindu god and judge of the dead ;<sup>2</sup> or the doctrine of purgatory in the Lamaism of Thibet ;<sup>3</sup> or the pious aspiration uttered by Tacitus concerning his father-in-law Agricola—"Siquis piorum

<sup>1</sup> Surah 71. Sale's *Koran*, p. 425.

<sup>2</sup> *Hinduism*, by Sir M. Monier-Williams, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> *Buddhism*, by Dr. T. W. Rhys Davids, p. 250.



manibus locus, si, ut sapientibus placet, non cum corpore extinguntur magnæ animæ : placide quiescas" (*Agricolæ Vita*) : "if there be any place reserved for the spirits of the righteous, or if—as our wise men seem to think—the death of the body does not mean the death of a noble soul, then may thy resting be in peace" ; or the sadly beautiful Greek epitaph, assigned to the second or third century B.C., which is preserved in the St. Deiniol's Library at Hawarden :—

Τὸ πρὶν ὃ σὺμ Μούσαις στέρξας βίον ἦλθε πρὸ μοίρας  
 ἀσκέπτους νεκύων εἰς θαλάμους ΦΙΛΕΑΣ,  
 τρισὸν ἐπ' εἰκοστῷ πλήσας ἔτος· οἱ δὲ ὀλέσαντες  
 ἐλπίδα τὰν μούναν γηραλέοι γενέται  
 μύρονται τὸν ἄνυμφον ἀεὶ γόνον. Ἀλλὰ τὸν ἀγνόν,  
 Φερσεφόνη, στείλαις χώρον ἐς εὖσεβέων.

"Phileas, who lately loved this life in company with the Muses, before the appointed time has gone to the hidden chambers of the dead, having completed but three-and-twenty years on earth ; and they who have lost their only hope, his aged parents, bewail their ever unwedded offspring. But do thou, Persephone, bring his pure soul to the abode of the righteous."

Doubtless other similar passages or references might be adduced from the religious life and history of these peoples, but they are insufficient to warrant the assumption that the practice or the doctrine of

praying for the dead ever gained any real place among them.

However enough has been said to make it clear that, when the early Christians offered their intercessions for their departed friends, they were introducing no novelty into the religious world, but that such species of devotions was so ancient and so widespread among the nations of antiquity that it was the response to the demand of a natural desire, even if it is not to be included in what is technically designated "natural religion."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE EVIDENCE OF JUDAISM.

IN any examination into the Christian doctrine and practice of prayers for the departed, it is of prime importance to investigate the relation of Judaism to the same, inasmuch as Judaism was the parent stock from which the Christian Church sprang, and our Lord and his apostles and St. Paul were all of them Jews, and to a great extent conformed to Jewish ordinances and usages. And it must be carefully borne in mind that there was no real conflict between the Old and the New Testaments, for Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil ; and when Marcion and others promulgated their doctrine of the Demiurge, and emphasized, or rather distorted, the differences between Jewish and Christian revelation, they met with conspicuous want of success.

With regard to the subject of praying for the departed the Old Testament has little to say. Nor indeed is this just matter for surprise ; for not

only were the Jews profoundly ignorant of the subject, nothing having been revealed to them, but furthermore they seem to have cherished no special desire to look into the future, and they did not attempt to solve eschatological problems, or indulge in speculations as to the state of the departed. No doubt this was partly due to the fact that in old time the idea of personal individuality was but little developed, the Jew largely regarding himself rather as a part of his nation, and his life as being merged or absorbed in the life of his people ; so that when the person died, the unit—i.e. the nation—was not affected, and his existence was not destroyed, for he continued to live in the life of the nation. Partly too it may be accounted for because, in common with other Shemitic peoples, the Jew had inherited some belief in a personal and individual existence after death ; but so dim and shadowy was that existence thought to be, and so joyless and unattractive was the prospect as pictured by him, that he would instinctively recognise that there was no pleasure or comfort to be derived from contemplating his future condition or learning more about it. Thus to him death did not generally imply annihilation, though in moments of pessimism he might sometimes so express himself ; but it did mean the ending of

his personal relations with God, and a descent into the dark region of Sheol, where all the enjoyment of life would be at an end for evermore.

Under such conditions as these there would be little scope for praying for the departed, or any encouragement of a desire to do so, at least in earlier ages. When however the national existence was blotted out by the fall of Jerusalem, religious perception, which had hitherto regarded the nation as the unit, would begin to grasp the idea of personal individualism, and would naturally be led on to see in self the fulfilment of hopes which had before centred in the nation. This conception, too, was fostered by the realization that the acceptance of belief in a future life afforded the only possible solution of the problem presented by the spectacle of the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous ; and as their religious instinct encouraged the prospect of a brighter future, the Jews cherished the hope of happiness beyond the grave, happiness both for themselves and for others.

The first instance of this feeling having found expression in any kind of prayer for the departed we claim to see in Psalm cxxxii, which recent commentators agree in assigning to a late date—A. F. Kirkpatrick and E. G. King conjecture it to belong to the age of Nehemiah (i.e. after B.C.

445), C. A. Briggs places it in the early Greek period (i.e. after 332), while W. J. Cobb thinks that it refers to Simon Maccabæus (142-135). The first verse of this psalm is translated thus in the Revised Version :—" Lord, remember for David all his affliction ;" which must mean that David was regarded by the writer not only as being still in existence, but as also capable of being the recipient of God's favour as a return or a recompense for all the trouble he had taken, or the affliction he had suffered. The expression זָכוֹר לַדָּוִד is similar to that used in Nehemiah v. 19 and xiii. 31, זָכוֹר לִי, where the explanatory לְמוֹכָה is added ; and it is precisely similar to that in Nehemiah xiii. 14 and 22, where also לְמוֹכָה is understood, though not expressed. This is emphasized by C. A. Briggs,<sup>1</sup> who renders it thus :—" Remember unto David (for good) all his affliction," and by E. G. King (*The Psalms*), whose translation is, " Remember for David (i.e. to David's credit) all his affliction." Furthermore there is much to be said in favour of A. F. Kirkpatrick's rendering, " Remember for David all the trouble he underwent," or that proposed in the *Church Quarterly Review*,<sup>2</sup> " Remember to David all his anxious cares " ;

<sup>1</sup> *International Critical Commentary on the Psalms.*

<sup>2</sup> Vol. x, p. 4.

for the subsequent verses are an expansion or recapitulation of the *may* which marked David's efforts to provide a temple for the Lord ; and while it is difficult to understand how the author of this psalm or the compiler of 1 Chronicles could look back across the centuries and describe as 'affliction'<sup>1</sup> David's zealous forethought and lavish expenditure in preparing for the establishment of the worship of Jehovah in Jerusalem, the memory of his anxious cares or trouble would naturally impress itself powerfully on the imagination of succeeding generations. We take it then that the writer of Psalm cxxxii was asking God to remember King David's piety, and to reward him by somehow showing favour to him ; so that this passage stands forth as the first extant instance in the history of Judaism of a prayer for the departed.

We pass on to consider the subject of prayers for the departed as evidenced in the Apocrypha. In 2 Maccabees xii we have the narrative of how the Jews under Judas Maccabæus attacked Adullam (about B.C. 166), some of them being slain ; and of how, when their friends went to bury their bodies, they found that each had, hidden under his garments, consecrated tokens of the idols of Jamnia, so that their death was interpreted as

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chronicles xxii. 14.

a punishment for their impiety. "All therefore betook themselves unto supplication, beseeching that the sin committed might be wholly blotted out" (verses 41 and 42); and besides this, Judas made a collection, sending the money to Jerusalem, "to offer a sacrifice for sin, doing therein right well and honourably, in that he took thought for a resurrection." And the historian adds this comment:—"For if he were not expecting that they that had fallen would rise again, it were superfluous and idle to pray for the dead. (And if he did it looking unto an honourable memorial of gratitude laid up for them that die in godliness, holy and godly was the thought.) Wherefore he made the propitiation for them that had died, that they might be released from their sin." We may notice here that there is nothing in the narrative to lead us to suppose that in thus offering prayers for the departed, Judas and his followers were introducing any novelty, or indeed were doing anything unusual; but rather the generous support that he received from the contributors for the sin offering shows that the intercession was regarded as reasonable, and likely to be advantageous to the dead.<sup>1</sup>

Some ejaculatory prayers for the departed are

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Luckock's *After Death*, p. 56.



to be found in the Fifth Book of the Maccabees:—  
 “To whom be peace,” and “God be merciful to them,”<sup>1</sup> which, according to J. H. Blunt, “clearly show an established habit among the people of using such devotions.”<sup>2</sup> The full passages, translated into Latin from the Arabic by Gabriel Sionita, and printed as *Machabæorum II, Versio Arabica*, are as follows:—“Ut adimpleret Deus Optimus Maximus quod prædixerat Daniel Propheta (cui pax) de quarto regno” (xii. 1); “Quem (i.e. Judam) ferentes patres illius, sepelierunt ad latus sepulchri Mathathiæ patris ejus (Deus misereatur illorum)”; and “Fertur autem, Hyrcanum aperuisse thesaurum, qui fuerat quibusdam regibus de filiis David (cui pax).”<sup>3</sup> These instances are but brief and unobtrusive, it is true; but the simple unaffected manner in which they are introduced shows that pious aspirations for blessing on departed souls came naturally to the Jews, and that there was nothing strange or unusual in their finding expression during the closing years of the first Christian century.

The evidence to be drawn from the *Testament of Abraham* would be worth more if we were assured of its Jewish origin, for in chapter xiv of Recension A is a striking instance of prayer for

<sup>1</sup> 5 Maccabees xii. 1; xvii. 15; xxi. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Annotated Bible*, Apocrypha, pp. 156, 207.

<sup>3</sup> Walton's *Biblia Polyglotta*, vol. iv, pp. 121, 125, 127.

a departed soul being credited with powerful efficacy. Dr. M. R. James, indeed, who edited the *Testament* with a critical introduction in 1892, believes that the document is the work of a Jewish Christian of the second century, and that it suffered from alterations at a later date ; and therefore it is not to be cited as an actual instance of Jewish practice. But Jewish authorities claim it as a Jewish work, so that we are justified in appealing to it as an example of what Jewish scholars believe to have been agreeable to their view of the good offices of the living for the dead at the beginning of the Christian era.<sup>1</sup>

The evidence of Jewish liturgies is a somewhat difficult one, as so little seems to be known with regard to the age of the services at present in use. On the one hand we have the statement of Dr. S. Schechter<sup>2</sup> that during the first ten centuries of the Christian era there is not to be found in the liturgy "a single fixed prayer for the benefit of those departed." But on the other hand he allows that "we find cases in Rabbinical literature where prayers were offered for the benefit of the dead," and he gives as instances, "Gen. R., XCVIII, 2, and references given there ; Chagigah, 15b ;

<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, I. Singer, vol. x, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, p. 198.

Sotah, 10b ; Makkoth, 11b. Cf. also Friedmann's נפחמים, p. 23 *seq.* ; 2 Maccabees XIII, 43 *seq.* ; and he says that the principle was accepted that "the living redeem the dead."<sup>1</sup>

There is a special form of the prayer Kaddish, known as the "Mourners' Kaddish," which is recited by mourners during the first year of a parent's death and on the anniversary. It is not actually a prayer for the departed, but it seems to be viewed as an equivalent. The mourners, clad in praying-shawls, mount the platform in the middle of the synagogue, and publicly chant this prayer, whose recitation is held to benefit the departed, the popular belief being that no one can pass a certain stage on the other side of the grave until the Kaddish has been said on his behalf.

More definite is the case of the Haskarath Neshamoth (Commemoration of Souls), which is appointed to be said in the Ashkenazic or German synagogues on the Day of Atonement and on the last days of the three chief festivals (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles,) as an act of intercession for departed parents or relatives. It appears to be a prayer for the mourners only and not for congregational use, which makes its application the more marked. It is couched in these beautiful

<sup>1</sup> See Tanchuma, תנחומי, I. ; Tan. B., Introduction, 90a.

terms :—" May God remember the soul of my honoured father . . . who has gone to his eternal home ; on whose behalf I vow alms ; by way of reward, be his soul bound up in the bundle of life with the souls of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, and all other righteous men and women that are in the Garden of Eden, and let us say Amen." We are told further that "in many synagogues a sort of bidding prayer is used by the cantor on the great festivals ; a list of names of dead pious donors being read out, and a commemoration being made of them. Bequests are made for this special purpose, or donations given by surviving relatives. A requiem for the souls of the martyrs is also said in the morning service for certain Sabbaths." <sup>1</sup>

The following beautiful prayer is one publicly used in the Passover services in the Great Portland Street Synagogue, London, and contains a filial and pious commemoration such as Christians of the Anglican Communion may well desiderate for their Prayer Book :—" Father of mercy ! In thy hand are the souls of the living and the dead. May thy comforts soothe our hearts, as we remember on this sacred day our revered and beloved kins-

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue*, Oesterley and Box, p. 340.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

folk who have gone to their eternal rest, and as we think of our dear parents, the crown of our heads and our glory, whose desire it was to train us in the way of virtue and righteousness, to teach us thy statutes and precepts, and to instruct us to do justice and to love mercy. We beseech thee, O Lord ! grant us strength to remain faithful to their teachings, while the breath given of thee is within us. And may their souls repose in the land of life, beholding thy majesty and delighting in thy reward. And now, O good and beneficent God ! what shall we say, what shall we speak unto thee ? Our needs are so manifold, we cannot declare them. We are filled with shame as we think of all the goodness thou hast dealt unto us. O turn thou in mercy and loving kindness unto the supplications of thy servants who now pour out their souls before thee. May thy loving kindness not depart from us. Give us our daily sustenance, and let us not be in need of the gifts of flesh and blood. Remove from us care and sorrow, distress and fear, shame and contempt. Strengthen us in our reverence for thee, and fortify us to keep thy perfect law. Vouchsafe unto us the joy of training our sons and daughters to keep thy commandments and to perform thy will all the days of their life. O God, take us not hence in the midst of our days. Let us

complete in peace the number of our years. Verily we know that our life is frail, that our days are as an hand-breadth. Therefore help us, O God of our salvation, to live before thee in truth and uprightness during the years of our pilgrimage. And when it shall please thee to take us from earth, be thou with us ; and may our souls be bound up in the bond of life with the souls of our parents and of the righteous who stand before thee in Heaven. Amen. Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

The present Jewish Order for the Burial of the Dead seems to have as its main object the leading of men’s minds to resignation to God’s will, which it does by setting before them the greatness of God’s workings, rather than any consideration of the state of the departed. Thus it contains but little reference to the deceased person, and the only expression which can be regarded as a prayer for him is the brief formula, “ May he come to his appointed place in peace,” which is said as the coffin is lowered into the grave. But the Burial Service, in which is printed the office to be used at the interment and also an “ Afternoon Service,” provides too a “ Form of Prayer to be said in the House of Mourning after the Morning and Evening Service ” ; and this last consists chiefly of an ample

<sup>1</sup> From a copy supplied by the Rabbi of the synagogue.

and direct intercessory prayer for the departed, which is as follows :—

“Thou, O Lord of mercy and loving-kindness ! In thy hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all flesh. Thou killest and makest alive ; thou bringest down to the grave and bringest up again. We offer our supplication unto thee on behalf of our brother . . . who has been gathered unto his people. O Lord, have mercy upon him, pardon his transgressions, for there is not a just person upon earth who doeth good and sinneth not. Remember unto him the meritorious deeds of his life, and grant him his recompense. Take his soul into thy keeping. Show him the path of life, fulness of joy in thy presence, pleasures for evermore at thy right hand. Vouchsafe unto him the happiness thou hast treasured up for the just, even as it is written :—Oh how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for those that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for those that trust in thee before the sons of man.”<sup>1</sup>

Further, the ejaculatory form of prayer may be mentioned, these formulas being customary with Jews when speaking of a deceased friend :—  
“Peace be unto him,” “His memory be for a blessing,” “May his rest be Eden,” “May so and so live,” “May his light continue to shine.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Burial Service.*

<sup>2</sup> Oesterley and Box, p. 308.

Lastly we turn to the evidence to be derived from epitaphs, and here the materials are rich and of a conclusive character. A Jewish tombstone from Aden, now in the British Museum (formerly accepted as dating from 282 B.C., but now believed to belong to a period several centuries after the beginning of the Christian era), contains this in its inscription :—"The pious Mashta (may her rest be glory !), daughter of the aged, the pious, the humble, the good, the God-fearing David (may the Spirit of God give him rest !)." <sup>1</sup>

: Others of ancient date may be quoted from Buxtorf's Talmud :—"I have set this stone for a monument over the head of the venerable B. Eliakim deceased. God grant he may repose in the garden of Eden, with the rest of the saints of the earth" ; and this, dated 1375 :—"The most holy, most chaste, and most excellent Rebecca, daughter to the holy rabbi Samuel the Levite. Let her soul be found in the garden of Eden ;" and for R. Baruch, "who descended towards those who are among the cedars," the prayer is offered, "that his soul may be in the bundle of life." <sup>2</sup> And Dr. Luckock cites several discovered in various lands by R. Jacob Saphir, a distinguished Jewish

<sup>1</sup> Luckock's *After Death*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Origines Hebrææ*, T. Lewis, vol. iii, p. 80.



traveller, some of which are shown by their dates to belong to the period before the commencement of the Christian era, the most usual formulas being these:—"May his rest be glory;" "May his memory be for his resurrection;" "May his memory be blessed;" "May the Spirit of the Lord lead him to rest."<sup>1</sup>

There are also similar inscriptions found in the Jewish Catacombs at Rome and elsewhere. Here is a Hebrew one at Venosa in the south of Sicily:—"Resting-place of Beta, son of Faustinus. Peace be to his soul! May his spirit share in the life eternal!"<sup>2</sup> And a few from Garrucci's *Nuove Epigrafi* may be quoted:—"Marcia Bona Judea. Dormitio tua in bonis;" "Alexander Bubularius de macello quixit (qui vixit) annis XXX. Anima bona omniorum amicus, dormitio tua in dicæis (δικαίους);" and this from the Greek:—"Here lieth Joses, a sweet infant aged two years and eight months. His father was Procopius, and his mother Crespina. Pray for his sleep in peace."<sup>3</sup>

It would be easy to multiply such examples both from ancient and from modern times, but it may suffice to add that every Jewish tombstone erected now bears a prayer for the departed of the

<sup>1</sup> *After Death*, pp. 61, 62.

<sup>2</sup> *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. iii, p. 616.

<sup>3</sup> Article 8 in the *Edinburgh Review*, 1864, p. 245.

tenor of those quoted above, the prayer being usually shortened to initial letters, after the manner of the familiar R.I.P.

The deduction to be drawn from all this varied and somewhat confusing evidence, it appears to me, is this. For more than two thousand years the Jews have recognised as right and beneficial the practice of praying for the departed ; and though they have not until comparatively recent times been moved to accord to such a practice any prominent place in their public worship—perhaps because they had no definite idea of any progress in the spirit world—yet the conviction that God hears prayer and the belief that the departed are capable of receiving the blessing of his favour were very real articles of faith with them, and commonly found expression in many informal ways, and from time to time also, as occasion served, in public prayer for the dead. The practice then can be traced back prior to the time of our Lord and his apostles ; and, Jews as they were, he and they too would naturally follow so pious and innocent a custom, and, like the men of their generation, would offer their prayers for their departed friends.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

ALTHOUGH in the New Testament death is not uncommonly spoken of under the figure of 'sleep,' yet the view adopted, whether by teachers or by writers, is that the falling asleep of the body involves no somnolence or lethargy or unconsciousness of the soul. On the contrary, not only are the departed able to exercise powers and to experience sensations or passions, such as they were endowed with while still in the flesh, but in some respects at least their condition has advanced or progressed, their endowments are higher, their perceptions and realizations are quickened.

The Lord himself pointedly declared that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though we may speak of them as dead, are still living;<sup>1</sup> and that Abraham not only rejoiced in the anticipation of seeing the day of Christ, but actually saw it and rejoiced thereat.<sup>2</sup> He also represented the

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xxii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> St. John viii. 56.

rich man in Hades as feeling, and seeing, and entreating, and remembering, and reasoning, and Lazarus as enjoying comfort;<sup>1</sup> and it is impossible to avoid the inference that the faith of the repentant robber would find happy reward by his being permitted to company with Jesus in Paradise.<sup>2</sup> And what St. Peter believed concerning Christ's condition in the spirit-world he reveals to us in his First Epistle,<sup>3</sup> where he declares that when he was "put to death in the flesh," his disembodied spirit was actually "quicken'd," or endowed with fresh access of life; while his statement that Christ "went and preached unto the spirits in prison"<sup>4</sup> makes it quite evident that he regarded those in the intermediate state as able to listen to and profit by the message thus brought to them. St. Paul too, though able to view his life as being so closely knit up with his Saviour that with him "to live is Christ," yet felt that "to die is gain"—evidently meaning that at death his union with Christ would be even more fully realized, so that to depart and be with Christ would be "very far better."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the contrast between the fullness of communion with the Saviour after death

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xvi. 23-30.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 43.

<sup>3</sup> iiii. 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> I Peter iii. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Philippians i. 21, 23, and Lightfoot, *ad loc.*

and its comparative meagreness before was such that St. Paul could even bring himself to declare that "whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord," and that it would be preferable to be "absent from the body" that we may be "at home with the Lord";<sup>1</sup> and of the indescribable delights of that condition he himself had had experience when he was "caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."<sup>2</sup> To these references may be added the instance of how St. John "saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held"; and these were so fully endowed with vital powers and faculties that they could long and pray for the great consummation, and were also competent of experiencing such betterment and comfort as is expressed in their being clad in white robes, and being assured that their desires should be accomplished when they should have rested "yet for a little time."<sup>3</sup>

We must acknowledge that all this has an important bearing on the main question, for there is manifestly scope for prayer on behalf of those who are so circumstanced; whereas there would

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians v. 6, 8.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians xii. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Revelation vi. 9-11.

be little encouragement to pray for the departed if we believed them to be in a state of apathy and torpor. It is true that the recorded sayings of the Lord contain no reference to prayer for the departed, either in support or in condemnation of the practice ; but if it was customary for the Jews of his day to offer such prayers (as a Jewish savant such as Dr. Schiller-Szinessy was satisfied was the case), he would naturally, as a devout worshipper in the Temple and synagogue, endorse the prevailing use ; and the widespread custom in very early times constitutes a very strong argument against the existence of any traditional condemnation by him of prayers for the departed.

We pass on then to the one passage in the New Testament that bears directly on this topic. In his Second Epistle to St. Timothy, St. Paul writes thus of Onesiphorus, concerning whom we know nothing more than what we learn here :—  
 “The Lord grant mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus : for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain ; but, when he was in Rome, he sought me diligently, and found me (the Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord in that day) ; and in how many things he ministered at Ephesus, thou knowest very well ” (i. 16–18) ; and again :—“ Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the

D

house of Onesiphorus" (iv. 19). Now the most natural interpretation of these passages requires us to allow that when St. Paul thus wrote, Onesiphorus was dead. Several circumstances point to this conclusion :—the greeting (in iv. 19) sent not to Onesiphorus but to his household, although in the case of Prisca and Aquila the message was personal and individual, as also were the greetings from Eubulus and Pudens and Linus and Claudia ; the good wish (in i. 16) for Onesiphorus's household—evidently a good wish for the present time—but not for Onesiphorus himself, whereas he himself is mentioned just afterwards (verse 18) with the aspiration that he may find mercy—not now, but—in that day, i.e. the day of the Lord's second coming, or the Day of Judgment ; the references to the former history of Onesiphorus, with no suggestion of the present, so that not only does the passage make it impossible to imagine his being then either in Rome or in Ephesus, but his kindness and fidelity and good deeds are looked back upon as all belonging entirely to the past (for all the verbs are aorists — even *ἐπαισχυνθη*, although the *ἄλυσις* was still there as a possible cause of shame) ; the lavishing of praise upon Onesiphorus to an extent that has no parallel in the case of any of St. Paul's living friends, but which is so

suitable as a tribute of affectionate appreciation for one departed ; and lastly, the fact that the early Church adopted as a prayer for the departed the expression that occurs in verse 18 (a).

It is worth while to notice that the phrase " that day " (*ἐκείνη ἡ ἡμέρα*), which is frequently used in the Gospels to denote the great Day of the Lord or the Day of Judgment,<sup>1</sup> in the Pauline Epistles carries this meaning exclusively :—" He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day ;" <sup>2</sup> " I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day ;" <sup>3</sup> and " The crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." <sup>4</sup>

It may further be pointed out that though the expression " the house of Onesiphorus " might conceivably include Onesiphorus himself, yet with the one doubtful exception of 1 Corinthians i. 16 (" the household of Stephanas "), the regular New Testament usage is to make mention of the person

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew vii. 22, xxiv. 36, xxvi. 29 ; St. Luke x. 12, xvii. 31, xxi. 34 ; St. John xiv. 20, xvi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thessalonians i. 10.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Timothy i. 12.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Timothy iv. 8.



as well as his house, the two being regarded as distinct.<sup>1</sup>

Among commentators there has been much difference of opinion as to the interpretation of this passage, and some have manifestly allowed their judgment to be biassed by doctrinal considerations. It appears however that almost every modern writer whose opinion carries any considerable weight, considers that Onesiphorus was deceased, and that St. Paul was here offering a prayer for him. Among the more recent ones are these :—*A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, edited by J. R. Dummelow (1909), where it is “inferred with considerable probability that Onesiphorus was dead” (p. 1002); Murray’s *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, edited by W. C. Piercy (1908), which cites “facts which seem to show with some conclusiveness that Onesiphorus was dead when this epistle was written” (p. 625); the *Century Bible*, in which R. F. Horton (1901), commenting on the Pastoral Epistles, declares (p. 147) .“it would seem that Onesiphorus had subsequently died,” though indeed he sees “here no prayer, but a pious wish” (p. 148); Hastings’s *Dictionary of the Bible* (1900), which considers that St. Paul’s expressions “make it

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Acts x. 2, xi. 14, xvi. 15, 31, xviii. 8; 1 Timothy iii. 4.

most probable that he was now dead"; J. H. Bernard, who in the *Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges* (1899) is well assured that "it seems probable that Onesiphorus was dead when St. Paul prayed on his behalf" (p. 114), and A. E. Humphreys in the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, who thinks that "the natural though not necessary inference . . . is that Onesiphorus was dead"; the *Expositor's Bible*, in which A. Plummer,<sup>1</sup> who has the fullest and most carefully worked-out article on the subject, strongly favours the view that here we have full Scriptural precedent and authority for the practice of praying for the departed; M. F. Sadler's *Commentary* (1893), which holds that "the only fair explanation is that Onesiphorus was dead"; H. M. Luckock's *Intermediate State* (1890) and *After Death* (1879), which argue strongly in the same strain; Ellicott's *New Testament Commentary* (1883), wherein H. D. M. Spence affirms that "there is but little doubt that when St. Paul wrote this Epistle Onesiphorus' death must have recently taken place"; J. H. Blunt's *Annotated Bible, New Testament* (1882), which thinks the prayer "is most suitable to the case of one who had departed this life," and suggests that "he had fallen

<sup>1</sup> *Pastoral Epistles*, 1894, pp. 323-30.

a victim to the Neronian persecution either at Rome or Ephesus" (p. 575); F. G. Lee's *Prayer for the Departed*, 1872, which is sure that Onesiphorus was dead (p. 45); and the *Explanation of the Thirty-nine Articles* by Bishop Forbes, 1871, which declares that "there is little doubt that St. Paul prayed for Onesiphorus when dead" (p. 312). And with those already quoted there agree also such writers as F. W. Farrar,<sup>1</sup> C. J. Ellicott,<sup>2</sup> Conybeare and Howson,<sup>3</sup> Dr. Huther,<sup>4</sup> and Dean Alford.<sup>5</sup> Roman Catholic commentators generally hold the view expressed. But against it must be reckoned J. A. Bastow's *Bible Dictionary*, 1890; H. Wace in the *Speaker's Commentary*, 1881; C. Wordsworth;<sup>6</sup> Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, 1863; Webster and Wilkinson's *Greek Testament*, 1861; Patrick and Lowth's *Commentary*, 1853; Kitto's *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*, 1845; and the Commentaries of M. Poole (1841), Thomas Scott (1825), and Matthew Henry (1811), as well as most of those of the eighteenth century.

In the face of such divergence of opinion it

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Work of St. Paul*, vol. ii, p. 549.

<sup>2</sup> *Pastoral Epistles*, 1869, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> *Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, 1864, vol. ii, p. 585.

<sup>4</sup> In Meyer's *Commentary on the New Testament*.

<sup>5</sup> *Greek Testament*, 1857, vol. iii, p. 359.

<sup>6</sup> *Greek Testament*, 1872.

would manifestly be unreasonable to contend that the New Testament supplies any absolute proof of the practice of praying for the departed ; but if one dispassionately examines St. Paul's words and interprets them in their most natural sense, and considers that by the assumption that Onesiphorus was dead all difficulties disappear, whereas otherwise it is impossible satisfactorily to explain the modes of expression, one must realize that the probability verges on a certainty that here St. Paul was praying for a departed friend. And this probability is strengthened by examining the list of authorities. For the more modern and abler critics are almost unanimous in support of that view, whereas the opposite opinion is found chiefly in old-fashioned commentators, many of whom are evidently biassed against prayers for the dead by their anxiety to avoid the erroneous teaching of Roman Catholics on the subject of purgatory.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TESTIMONY OF THE EARLY EASTERN CHURCH.

PERHAPS the earliest example in patristic literature of prayer for the dead is to be found in the *Testament of Abraham*, which is ascribed to some Jewish Christian writer in Egypt in the second century.<sup>1</sup> In that work such intercession figures as availing mightily for the benefit of a departed person, and is evidently regarded as a pious and right act. The passage is this :—

Εἶπε δὲ Ἀβραὰμ πρὸς τὸν ἀρχιστράτηγον· Δεῦρο Μιχαὴλ ἀρχιστράτηγε, ποιήσωμεν εὐχὴν ὑπὲρ τῆς ψυχῆς ταύτης, καὶ ἴδωμεν εἰ ἐπακούεται ἡμῶν ὁ Θεός. Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ ἀρχιστράτηγος· Ἀμὴν γένοιτο. Καὶ ἐποίησαν δέησιν καὶ εὐχὴν ὑπὲρ τῆς ψυχῆς. Καὶ εἰσήκουσεν αὐτοὺς ὁ Θεός, καὶ ἀναστάντες ἀπὸ τῆς προσευχῆς οὐκ εἶδον τὴν ψυχὴν ἰσταμένην ἐκεῖσε. Καὶ εἶπεν Ἀβραὰμ πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον· Ποῦ ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ ἣν ἐκράτεις εἰς τὸ μέσον ; Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος· Σέσωται διὰ τῆς εὐχῆς σου τῆς δικαίας, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἔλαβεν

<sup>1</sup> Dr. M. R. James, *Texts and Studies*, ii. 2.

αὐτὴν ἄγγελος φωτοφόρος καὶ ἀνήνεγκεν αὐτὴν ἐν τῇ παραδείσῳ.

“And Abraham said to the chief captain, ‘Come, chief captain Michael, let us offer prayer for the soul of this dead person, and let us see whether God hears us.’ And the chief captain said, ‘Yes, let us do so.’ So they offered prayer and supplication for the dead person, and God heard them. And when they had risen up from their prayer, they could not see the dead person standing there. Then Abraham said to the angel, ‘Where is the soul that you set in the midst?’ And the angel said, ‘It has been saved by means of your righteous prayer, and lo! a bright angel has taken it and borne it to paradise.’”

Our next example is the epitaph of Avircius, Bishop of Hieropolis in Lesser Phrygia, which contains this request :—

Ταῦθ' ὁ νοῶν εὐξαιτο ὑπὲρ μου πᾶς ὁ συνφδός

(“Let every friend who observeth this, pray for me”).

This will be noticed more fully in the chapter entitled “The Evidence of Early Christian Tombs.”

About the same date is to be placed the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, which, like the tombstone of Avircius, bears testimony to second century Christian usage in Asia Minor. In that work

(num. 28) Falconilla, daughter of Queen Tryphæna, figures as an advocate of prayers for the dead, the practice being mentioned quite naturally, as though it were a normal custom among the believers of that period.

Φαλκονίλλα ἦν τεθνέωσα, καὶ κατ' ὄναρ εἶπεν αὐτῇ·  
Μῆτερ, τὴν ξένην ταύτην Θέκλαν ἔξεις εἰς τὸν ἐμὸν  
τόπον, ἵνα εὕξηται περὶ ἐμοῦ καὶ μετατεθῶ εἰς τὸν τῶν  
δικαίων τόπον.

“Falconilla was dead, and in a vision said to her (i.e. Tryphæna), ‘Mother, you will have this stranger, Thecla, in my place, that she may pray for me, that I may pass to the abode of the righteous.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

Another instance from the same country, and belonging approximately to the same age (about 160–170 A.D.), is to be found in the apocryphal work *Acta Joannis*,<sup>2</sup> and constitutes the first mention of the celebration of the Holy Communion in connexion with the departed.

Τῇ δὲ ἐξῆς ἡμέρᾳ παραγίγνεται ὁ Ἰωάννης ἅμα τῷ  
Ἀνδρονίκῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ἐξ ἑωθινῆς εἰς τὸ μνήμα,  
τρίτην ἡμέραν ἐχούσης τῆς Δρουσιανῆς, ὅπως ἄρτον  
κλάσωμεν ἐκεῖ.

“Early next day came John with Andronicus

<sup>1</sup> *Monumenta Ecclesiæ Liturgica*, Cabrol and Leclercq, vol. i, section 1, p. lxxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> *Acta Apost. Apocr.*, Lipsius and Bonnet, i, 186.

and the brethren to the tomb, it being the third day after the death of Drusiana, that we might break bread there."

From the third century we may cite the practice of the Church in Egypt as shown in the writings of Origen, his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* being preserved in the Latin translation of Rufinus. "Meminisse sanctorum sive in collectis solennibus, sive pro eo ut ex recordatione eorum proficiamus, aptum et conveniens." "It is right and proper that we should commemorate the saints, whether by offering public prayers, or by the benefit that we derive from our remembrance of them."<sup>1</sup>

Some lines in the *Sibylline Oracles* are sometimes quoted in this connexion; but though they do emphasize the efficacy of intercession on behalf of the departed, it is doubtful whether they may be justly cited here. For the third book of the Oracles, in which the passage occurs, is not certainly of Christian origin, some scholars contending that it is the work of a Jew of Alexandria of the time of the Antonines. According to others however it is to be accepted as a Christian composition of the middle of the third century, as indeed seems

<sup>1</sup> Origen, lib. ix, *in Rom.* 12. See Riddle's *Christian Antiquities*, p. 381.



to be required by the doctrine enunciated in the passage itself, which runs as follows :—

Εὐσεβέσιν, ὅποτεν Θεὸν ἄφθιτον αἰτήσωνται,  
 Ἐκ μαλεροῖο πυρὸς καὶ ἀθανάτων ἀπὸ βρυγμῶν  
 Ἀνθρώπους σῶσαι δώσει καὶ τοῦτο ποιήσει.

“ Whenever the righteous pray to the immortal God, he will permit them to save men from the devouring fire and from the gnashings that know no end ; and this he will do.” <sup>1</sup>

Our next authority is a *Commentary on the Book of Job*, which is generally included among the works of Origen, but really belongs to the fourth century, some sixty years or more after Origen’s death. The writer makes it quite plain that in the Egypt of his day the commemoration of the departed was regarded as a duty of considerable importance, and it would appear that a mass for the dead was included in the observances.

“ Propterea et memorias sanctorum facimus, et parentum nostrorum vel amicorum, in fide morientium, devote memoriam agimus ; tam illorum refrigerio gaudentes, quam etiam nobis piam consummationem in fide postulantes. Celebramus nimirum, religiosos cum sacerdotibus convocantes, fideles una cum clero ; invitantes adhuc egenos et pauperes, pupillos et viduas saturantes : ut

<sup>1</sup> *Sibylline Oracles*, Book iii, 331–33.

fiat festivitas nostra in memoriam requiei defunctis animabus, nobis autem efficiatur in odorem suavitatis in conspectu æterni Dei."

"Wherefore we commemorate not only the saints, but also with special devotion our own relatives and friends who died in the faith; and while we rejoice that they are in a place of refreshment, we ask for ourselves that we may continue faithful to the end. We call together the clergy, the laity, and the members of the religious orders to join in our Celebration, and we invite the poor and needy, and feast the widows and orphans; it being our aim that our commemoration may be both a memorial of that falling asleep of the departed, and may also avail for ourselves as a sweet-smelling odour in the sight of God eternal." <sup>1</sup>

The death of the Emperor Constantine the Great in 337 gave opportunity for elaborate funeral services, the obsequies being performed in the Church of the Apostles at Constantinople. A description of the ceremony has been preserved by the historian Eusebius in his *Life of Constantine*,<sup>2</sup> who writes as follows:—

Μέσσοι δὲ παρέσαν οἱ τοῦ Θεοῦ λειτουργοὶ σὺν

<sup>1</sup> Lib. iii, *Commentar. in Job*, inter opera Origenis, vol. ii, p. 902.

<sup>2</sup> Bk. iv, chap. 71, *Die griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, Eusebius*, vol. i, p. 147.

αὐτοῖς πλήθεσι πανδήμῳ τε θεοσεβείας λαφὶ τὰ τε τῆς ἐνθέου λατρείας δι' εὐχῶν ἀνεπλήρουν. Ἐνθα δὴ ὁ μὲν μακάριος ἄνω κείμενος ἐφ' ὑψηλῆς κρηπίδος ἐδοξάζετο, λεῶς δὲ παμπληθῆς σὺν τοῖς τῷ Θεῷ ἱερωμένοις οὐ δακρύων ἐκτὸς σὺν κλαυθμῷ δὲ πλείονι τὰς εὐχὰς ὑπὲρ τῆς βασιλέως ψυχῆς ἀπεδίδοσαν τῷ Θεῷ.

“In the middle were the sacred ministers with a crowd of the populace and all the multitude of the faithful, and they performed the rites of the divine worship with prayer. The body of the blessed prince was there, raised up on a high catafalque, an object of respect from all. And all the people and those who were dedicated to God, shedding tears and wailing aloud, offered up their prayers to God for the deceased monarch.”

Here we notice that mention is made of both public and private prayer for the departed, *λατρεία* δι' εὐχῶν being the liturgical service, and εὐχαὶ ὑπὲρ τῆς βασιλέως ψυχῆς the people's prayers. Eusebius goes on to mention the evidences of God's favour to Constantine, inasmuch as he was counted worthy of enjoying the benefit of the holy offices:—*Θεσμῶν τε θείων καὶ μυστικῆς λειτουργίας ἀξιούμενον καὶ κοινωνίας ὁσίων ἀπολαῦον εὐχῶν.*

We next appeal to Cyril of Jerusalem, who in his *Mystagogical Lectures*, addressed to the newly baptized in or about A.D. 347, sets forth the rationale of the various parts of the Liturgy. After treating

of the intercession for the living in the Consecration Prayer or Canon, he passes on to speak thus of the intercession for the departed :—

Εἴτα μνημονεύομεν καὶ τῶν προκεκοιμημένων, πρῶτον πατριαρχῶν, προφητῶν, ἀποστόλων, μαρτύρων ὅπως ὁ Θεὸς ταῖς εὐχαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ πρεσβείαις προσδέξηται ἡμῶν τὴν δέσιν. Εἴτα καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν προκεκοιμημένων ἁγίων πατέρων, καὶ ἐπισκόπων, καὶ πάντων ἀπλῶς τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν προκεκοιμημένων· μεγίστην ὄνησιν πιστεύοντες ἔσσεσθαι ταῖς ψυχαῖς, ὑπὲρ ὧν ἡ δέσις ἀναφέρεται, τῆς ἁγίας καὶ φρικωδεστάτης προκειμένης θυσίας.

“Next we commemorate also those who have fallen asleep before us, firstly patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, that in answer to their prayers and intercessions God would accept our petition. Then we make mention of the holy fathers and bishops, and of all others from among ourselves who have fallen asleep, for we believe that the greatest benefit will accrue to the souls of those for whom we make our petition in the presence of the holy and awful sacrifice.”<sup>1</sup>

A little later he argues the reasonableness of their praying for the dead, concluding with these words :—

Χριστὸν ἐσφαγιασμένον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἁμαρτημάτων προσφέρομεν, ἐξιλεούμενοι ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν τε καὶ ἡμῶν τὸν φιλόανθρωπον Θεόν.

<sup>1</sup> *Mystagogica*, v, chap. 9.

“We offer up for our sins Christ sacrificed, propitiating the good God both for them and for ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

Some few years later (368 or 369 A.D.) there died Cæsarius of Nazianzus, quæstor of Bithynia and physician; and his brother Gregory of Nazianzus, at that time Archbishop of Constantinople, composed in his honour a lengthy *Funeral Oration*. Therein he declared that he would annually celebrate his obit.

Τὰ δὲ δώσομεν τὰς δι' ἔτους προσφέροντες τιμὰς τε καὶ μνήμας, οἳ γε τῷ βίῳ περιλειπόμενοι.

“This we will do—we who survive him—we will every year honour his memory and offer our commemorations.”

And he closes with a prayer that God would receive his soul.

Ὡ ζωῆς καὶ θανάτου Κύριε! Ὡ ψυχῶν ἡμετέρων ταμία καὶ εὐεργέτα! Ὡ ποιῶν τὰ πάντα, καὶ μετασκευάζων τῷ τεχνίτῃ Λόγῳ κατὰ καιρόν, καὶ ὡς αὐτὸς ἐπίστασαι τῷ βάθει τῆς σῆς σοφίας καὶ διοικήσεως, νῦν μὲν δέχοιο Καισάριον, ἀπαρχὴν τῆς ἡμετέρας ἀποδημίας.

“O Lord of life and death, steward and benefactor of our souls, who createst all things and preparest them in due time by the designing Word, even as thou thyself knowest in all thy wisdom

<sup>1</sup> *Mystagogica*, v, chap. 10.

and power of control, receive now Cæsarius, the first-fruits of our pilgrimage.”<sup>1</sup>

In the third quarter of the fourth century there flourished Aërius, a priest of Sebasteia in Pontus—until the sixteenth century the only Christian teacher who opposed the practice of offering prayer for the departed. Such prayers he regarded as not only useless but pernicious, inconsequently arguing that if they availed for the benefit of the deceased, no one need trouble to live a holy life, for salvation might be secured by the provision of a multitude of persons to make prayers and offerings for him. To the refutation of this heresy and to the defence of the practice of praying for the dead Epiphanius of Salamis devoted one section of his great work against heresies, the *Panarion* (A.D. 374–376), in which occurs this passage :—

’Ωφελεῖ δὲ καὶ ἡ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν γινομένη εὐχή, εἰ καὶ τὰ ὅλα τῶν αἰτιαμάτων μὴ ἀποκόπτοι, ἀλλ’ οὖν γε διὰ τὸ πολλάκις ἐν κόσμῳ ἡμᾶς ὄντας σφάλλεσθαι ἀκουσίως τε καὶ ἐκουσίως, ἵνα τὸ ἐντελέστερον σημανθῇ. Καὶ γὰρ ὑπὲρ δικαίων ποιούμεθα τὴν μνήμην καὶ ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτωλῶν· ὑπὲρ μὲν ἁμαρτωλῶν, ὑπὲρ ἐλέους Θεοῦ δεόμενοι, ὑπὲρ δὲ δικαίων καὶ πατέρων καὶ πατριάρχων, προφητῶν καὶ ἀποστόλων καὶ εὐαγγελιστῶν καὶ μαρτύρων καὶ ὁμολογητῶν, ἐπισκόπων τε καὶ ἀναχωρητῶν,

<sup>1</sup> *Oratio 7* [alias 10], *In laudem Cæsarii Fratris*. Migne, *Greg. Naz.*, vol. i, p. 788.

καὶ παντὸς τοῦ τάγματος, ἵνα τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἀφορίσωμεν ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων τάξεως, διὰ τῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν τιμῆς, καὶ σέβας αὐτῷ ἀποδῶμεν.

“ But also prayer offered for them does avail, even though it may not remove the whole of their guilt. For when we are in the world we frequently commit sins, sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally, and the very object of this is that the efficacy of such prayer may be made quite plain. For the righteous we offer our commemoration, and also for sinners :—for sinners, because we are asking for God’s mercy ; for the righteous—fathers, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, bishops, hermits, and the rest—to help us to distinguish the Lord Jesus Christ from all human beings by the honour that is paid to him, and that we may render to him our worship.”

And further, in his account of the ordinances and observances of the Church he adds :—

Ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν τελευτησάντων ἐξ ὀνόματος τὰς μνήμας ποιοῦνται, προσευχὰς τελοῦντες καὶ λατρείας καὶ οἰκονομίας.

“ As for the departed, they commemorate them by name, with prayers and public services and offerings.” <sup>1</sup>

We now pass on to examine the works of Chrysostom. His *De Sacerdotio* was written in

<sup>1</sup> *Adversus Hæreses*, bk. iii, chap. 75, § 7 ; and summary, § 27. Dindorf’s edition, vol. iii, pp. 361, 585.

his Antioch days, about A.D. 382, and in it he mentions among the high functions of the priesthood that of propitiating God for the dead as well as for the living.

Τὸν γὰρ ὑπὲρ ὅλης τῆς πόλεως, καὶ τί λέγω πόλεως, πάσης μὲν οὖν τῆς οἰκουμένης πρεσβεύοντα, καὶ δεόμενον ταῖς ἀπάντων ἀμαρτίαις ἵλεω γενέσθαι τὸν Θεόν, οὐ τῶν ζώντων μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἀπελθόντων, ὁποῖόν τινα εἶναι χρή ;

“What I have been saying affects the city. But why should I treat of the city only? What manner of man then must he be who acts as God’s ambassador for the whole world, and offers up prayer to God that he would be merciful to the sins of all, not only the living but also the departed?”<sup>1</sup>

In his *Homily* 31 [*al.* 32] on *St. Matthew* Chrysostom thus sets forth the utility of praying for the departed :—

Τί μετὰ ταῦτα πένητας καλεῖς, καὶ παρακαλεῖς ἱερέας εὔξασθαι ; Ἵνα εἰς ἀνάπαυσιν ἀπέλθῃ, φησὶν, ὁ τετελευτηκώς, Ἵνα ἵλεων σχῇ τὸν δικαστήν. Ὑπὲρ τούτων οὖν θρηνεῖς καὶ ὀλολύξεις ;

“After this why do you call them poor, and ask priests to pray for them? It is in order that the deceased may enter into his rest, and that he

<sup>1</sup> *De Sacerdotio*, bk. vi, chap. 4. Mason and Nairn’s edition, p. 146.



may obtain a merciful judgment. Do you then mourn and lament for them? ”<sup>1</sup>

He then goes on to speak<sup>2</sup> of the benefit of almsgiving.

Εἰ γὰρ βάρβαροι συγκατακαίουσι τοῖς ἀπελθοῦσι τὰ ὄντα, πολλῷ μᾶλλον σε συναποστεῖλαι τῷ τετελευτηκότι δίκαιον τὰ αὐτοῦ, οὐχ ἵνα τέφρα γένηται, καθάπερ ἐκεῖνα, ἀλλ' ἵνα πλείονα τούτῳ περιβάλῃ δόξαν· καὶ εἰ μὲν ἁμαρτωλὸς ἀπῆλθεν, ἵνα τὰ ἁμαρτήματα λύσῃ· εἰ δὲ δίκαιος, ἵνα προσθήκη γένηται μισθοῦ καὶ ἀντιδόσεως.

“ For if barbarians are wont to burn men’s goods together with their dead bodies, much more is it right for you to dispatch the deceased’s goods with him : not with the object of reducing them to ashes, as in the former case, but in order that they may enhance the man’s glory. And if the departed was a sinner, this is done to obtain forgiveness of his sins ; if a righteous man, that his recompense and reward may be increased.”

There is a somewhat similar passage in his *Homily 41 on 1 Corinthians* to the effect that we ought not to bewail the dead, but rather aid them by our devotions and offerings.

Εἰ δὲ καὶ ἁμαρτωλὸς ἀπῆλθε, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο δεῖ χαίρειν, ὅτι ἐνεκόπη τὰ ἁμαρτήματα, καὶ οὐ προσέθηκε

<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom, Migne’s edition, vol. vii, pp. 374–375.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

τῇ κακίᾳ, καὶ βοηθεῖν, ὡς ἂν οἶόν τε ᾖ, οὐ δακρύνει, ἀλλ' εὐχαῖς καὶ ἱκετηρίαις καὶ ἐλεημοσύναις καὶ προσφοραῖς. Οὐ γὰρ ἀπλῶς ταῦτα ἐπινενόηται, οὐδὲ εἰκὴ μνήμην ποιούμεθα τῶν ἀπελθόντων ἐπὶ τῶν θείων μυστηρίων, καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν πρόσσιμεν, δεόμενοι τοῦ Ἀμνοῦ τοῦ κειμένου τοῦ λαβόντος τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, ἀλλ' ἵνα τις ἐντεῦθεν αὐτοῖς γένηται παραμυθία.

"But also if a sinner has passed away, even at this we ought to rejoice, because his sinning has been ended, and his vices have not been suffered to increase; and we ought to aid him as much as we can, not with tears, but with prayers and supplications and alms and offerings. For all this is by no means merely fanciful, and it is not in vain that we commemorate the departed in the divine mysteries, and approach God on their behalf, praying to the Lamb lying before us, who hath taken away the sin of the world; but we act thus in order that the departed may thereby receive comfort." <sup>1</sup>

The preceding passages belong to the period of Chrysostom's residence at Antioch. We append two more, which were the fruits of his industry while Archbishop of Constantinople, of about A.D. 400. One of these occurs in *Homily 21 on the Acts of the Apostles*, being taken from the part where he is speaking of the benefit that accrues

<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom, Migne's edition, vol. x, p. 361.

to the dead from having pious relatives to offer prayers for them.

Οὐκ εἰκὴ προσφοραὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀπελθόντων γίνονται, οὐκ εἰκὴ ἱκετηρίαι, οὐκ εἰκὴ ἐλεημοσύναι· ταῦτα πάντα τὸ Πνεῦμα διέταξε, δι' ἀλλήλων ἡμᾶς ὠφελείσθαι βουλόμενον. . . . Οὐχ ἀπλῶς ὁ διάκονος βοᾷ· Ἐπὲρ τῶν ἐν Χριστῷ κεκοιμημένων, καὶ τῶν τὰς μνείας ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐπιτελουμένων· οὐχ ὁ διάκονός ἐστιν ὁ αὐτὴν ἀφίεις τὴν φωνήν, ἀλλὰ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.

“It is not in vain that offerings are made for the departed; not in vain are our supplications and alms. All this the Holy Ghost ordained, as he wished that we should be benefited through one another's actions. . . . It is not merely the deacon's voice that sings, ‘For those who have fallen asleep in Christ and for those who are commemorating them’: it is not the deacon who utters the words, but it is the Holy Ghost.”<sup>1</sup>

The other passage is in Chrysostom's *Homily 3 on the Epistle to the Philippians*, and treats of the efficacy of masses for the dead:—

Οὐκ εἰκὴ ταῦτα ἐνομοθετήθη ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων, το ἐπὶ τῶν φρικτῶν μυστηρίων μνήμην γίνεσθαι τῶν ἀπελθόντων· ἴσασιν αὐτοῖς πολὺ κέρδος γινόμενον, πολλὴν τὴν ὠφέλειαν. Ὅταν γὰρ ἐστήκη λαὸς ὁλόκληρος χεῖρας ἀνατείνοντες, πλήρωμα ἱερατικόν, καὶ

<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom, Migne's edition, vol. ix, p. 170.

προκέηται ἡ φρικτὴ θυσία, πῶς οὐ δυσωπήσομεν ὑπὲρ τούτων τὸν Θεὸν παρακαλοῦντες ;

“Not in vain was this ordained by the Apostles—that the departed should be commemorated in the awful mysteries. It is well known that therein is much gain, much profit for them. For when all the people stand and lift up their hands, and the whole company of the priests are there, and the tremendous sacrifice is offered, we cannot but call upon God and importune him on their behalf.”<sup>1</sup>

Pachomius, a monk of the Thebaid in Lower Egypt, flourished in the fourth century, and from his *Life*—apparently written early in the following century—we cull this reference to the usual custom of celebrating mass for the dead, a custom set aside in his case:—

Μετὰ τοῦ κηδευθῆναι οὐκ ἀφήκεν τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ψάλλειν εἰς τὸ ὄρος ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὸ ἔθος ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ προσφορὰ ἐγένετο ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ.

“He would not allow the brethren to go to the mountain after his funeral and chant before his tomb, as was the custom, and not even was there an offering made for him.”<sup>2</sup>

We pass on to the *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, a work erroneously ascribed to Dionysius the

<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom, Migne’s edition, vol. xi, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup> *Vita S. Pach.*, 65 [42\*]. *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. i, p. 275.

Areopagite, but really belonging to the middle of the sixth century, and having its origin either in Edessa of Mesopotamia, or (more probably) in Alexandria. Chapter vii bears the title *Περὶ τῶν ἐπὶ τοῖς κεκοιμημένοις τελουμένων*, and consists of a description of funeral rites performed over the faithful, with an explanation of the meaning of each part. The service begins with prayer and giving of thanks, then the deacons read the Scriptures and sing canticles,

*Εἶτα τῶν λειτουργῶν ὁ πρῶτος ἀπολύει τοὺς κατηχουμένους, καὶ ἀνακηρύττει τοὺς ἤδη κεκοιμημένους ἁγίους, μεθ' ὧν ἅξιοι τὸν ἄρτι τελειωθέντα τῆς ὁμοταγούς ἀναρρήσεως, καὶ προτρέπεται πάντας αἰτῆσαι τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ μακαρίαν τελείωσιν· εἶτα προσελθὼν ὁ θεῖος ἱεράρχης, εὐχὴν ἱερωτάτην ἐπ' αὐτῷ ποιεῖται.*

“Then the archdeacon dismisses the catechumens, and reads loud the list of the saints departed, among whom he deems the man who has just terminated his life worthy of registration, as being of the same rank, and exhorts all present to strive to attain to the blessed consummation in Christ. Then the bishop comes forward and offers a most holy prayer over the deceased.”<sup>1</sup>

A little further on<sup>2</sup> he sets forth the object and scope of the bishop's prayer :—

<sup>1</sup> J. Parker's edition, pp. 70, 73.

<sup>2</sup> Part iii, p. 232.

Εἵτα προσελθὼν ὁ θεῖος ἱεράρχης, εὐχὴν ἱερὰν ἐπὶ τῷ κεκοιμημένῳ ποιεῖται· καὶ μετὰ τὴν εὐχὴν, αὐτὸς τε ὁ ἱεράρχης αὐτὸν ἀσπάζεται, καὶ ἐξῆς οἱ παρόντες ἅπαντες. Ἡ μὲν οὖν εὐχὴ τῆς θεαρχικῆς ἀγαθότητος δεῖται, πάντα μὲν ἀφεῖναι τὰ δι' ἀνθρωπίνην ἀσθένειαν ἡμαρτημένα τῷ κεκοιμημένῳ, κατατάξαι δὲ αὐτὸν ἐν φωτὶ καὶ χώρᾳ ζώντων, εἰς κόλπους Ἀβραάμ, καὶ Ἰσαάκ, καὶ Ἰακώβ, ἐν τόπῳ οὐ ἀπέδρα ὁδύνη καὶ λύπη καὶ στεναγμός.

“Then the bishop comes forward and offers a holy prayer over the deceased ; after which he takes his farewell of him, and then all those present do likewise. And in that prayer he asks the good God to forgive all the sins that the deceased has committed owing to the frailty of his human nature, and to set him in the light and land of the living, in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in a place whence pain and sorrow and sighing have fled away.”

And later on he defends against possible objectors the practice of praying for the departed, arguing the reasonableness of the practice in view of what the Scriptures teach us concerning the efficacy of prayer.

Among the works of Athanasius<sup>1</sup> is printed the *Quæstiones ad Antiochum*, known now not to have been written by him, though not traced to

<sup>1</sup> Migne's edition, vol. iv, p. 617.

any certain author. Among those questions (No. 34) is the following with its answer :—

Τί οὖν, οὐκ αἰσθάνονται τινος εὐεργεσίας καὶ αἱ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν ψυχαί, γινομένων ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν συναξέων καὶ εὐποιῶν καὶ προσφορῶν; Answer :—Εἰ μὴ τινος εὐεργεσίας μετεῖχον ἐκ τούτου, οὐκ ἂν ἐν τῇ προσκομιδῇ ἐμνημονεύοντο. Ἄλλ' ὥσπερ ὅταν ἡ ἄμπελος ἀνθεῖ ἔξω ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ, αἰσθάνεται δὲ τῆς ὁσμῆς αὐτῆς ὁ ἀποκεκλεισμένος οἶνος, καὶ συνανθεῖ καὶ αὐτός· οὕτω νόει καὶ τὰς τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν ψυχὰς μετέχειν εὐεργεσίας τινὸς ἐκ τῆς ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν γενομένης ἀναιμάκτου θυσίας καὶ εὐποιίας, ὡς μόνος ἐπίσταται καὶ κελεύει ὁ ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν ἐξουσιαστής καὶ Θεὸς ἡμῶν.

“What! do not even the souls of sinners feel any benefit when the mass and alms and oblations are offered for them?” Answer : “If they gained no benefit therefrom, they would not be commemorated at the oblation. But just as when a vine in the field bears blossoms, and the wine that is (as it were) contained in it shares its scent, and blossoms with it; so also you may know that the souls of sinners are benefited by the unbloody sacrifice offered for them and by alms. But this is known only to our God, the Lord of the living and the dead, whose command it is.”

Lastly, among the *Fragmenta Dogmatica*, ascribed to Cyril of Alexandria, is a tract entitled *Against those who say that there ought to be no offering for the dead*, in which the author refutes

those who object to praying for the dead as being vain by citing biblical instances of the efficacy of prayers offered for others, even in their absence, and concludes thus :—

*Τί τοίνυν ἡμῖν ἀνοσίως τὴν φιλοκέρδειαν ἐπιφημίζουσιν, οἱ τῶν εἰδότες οὐδέν, ἢ τὴν ἄνωθεν ἡμερότητα τοῖς ἐν πίστει κεκοιμημένοις σπουδάζομεν, τὴν ἀγίαν τε καὶ μυστικὴν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς τελοῦντες θυσίαν, ἡλεήμεθα, καὶ αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ τοῦ θανάτου πέπτωκε κράτος, καὶ ἡ τῆς ἀτελευτήτου ζωῆς ἀνέλαμψεν ἐλπίς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ Κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.*<sup>1</sup>

“Why then do they impiously attribute to us a base love of gain, knowing nothing of such matters, as though we were disturbing the heavenly repose of those who have fallen asleep in the faith? But when we offer for them the holy and mystic sacrifice, we obtain mercy for them; for both the power of death comes to naught, and there shines upon them the hope of immortal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We have thus passed in review the teaching of the chief doctors of the Church and others of early ages in the East; and we find that these supply testimony as to the Church's attitude towards this great question in the four principal cities of Eastern Christendom—Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople—besides elsewhere in Asia Minor,

<sup>1</sup> Migne, *Cyril Alex.*, vol. ix p. 1425.



Egypt, and Cyprus. And inasmuch as the only opposing voice was that of Aërius, whose views were at once denounced by the leaders of Christian thought, and never gained acceptance (save with the members of his own insignificant sect) ; while we have a fairly continuous catena of references during the first five or six centuries—the whole evidence, as far as it exists, favouring the practice ; we believe that we are right in holding that in the early Eastern Church it was the general and usual custom to pray for the departed, such prayer being both public and private, but being chiefly connected with the celebration of the Holy Communion. So well established indeed was the practice, that it is needless to carry the quotations further, especially as the Church's teaching is so clearly evidenced by the contents of the liturgies, which will be dealt with in a later chapter.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TESTIMONY OF THE EARLY WESTERN CHURCH.

OUR first evidence of prayers for the dead in the Western Church is derived from North Africa at the commencement of the third century. It is contained in the *Acts of Perpetua*—correctly entitled *The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas*—a document contemporary with the event (A.D. 203), and in large measure composed by Perpetua herself. Her narrative of her vision of her little brother Dinocrates is clear proof that praying for the dead was an established usage in the African Church at that period. The passage is this :—

“ Post dies paucos, dum universi oramus, subito media oratione profecta est mihi vox, et nominavi Dinocrâten : et obstupui quod numquam mihi in mentem venisset nisi tunc ; et dolui commemorata casus ejus. Et cognovi me statim dignam esse, et pro eo petere debere. Et cœpi pro ipso orationem facere multum, et ingemiscere ad Dominum.

Continuo ipsa nocte ostensum est mihi hoc. Video Dinocraten exeuntem de loco tenebroso, ubi et complura loca erant tenebrosa, æstuantem valde et sitientem, sordido vultu et colore pallido; et vulnus in facie ejus, quod cum moreretur habuit. Hic Dinocrates fuerat frater meus carnalis, annorum septem, qui per infirmitatem facie cancerata male obiit, ita ut mors ejus odio fuerit omnibus hominibus. Pro hoc ergo orationem feceram: et inter me et illum grande erat diastema, ita ut uterque ad invicem accedere non possemus. Erat deinde in ipso loco ubi Dinocrates erat piscina plena aqua, altiorem marginem habens quam erat statura pueri: et extendebat se Dinocrates quasi bibiturus. Ego dolebam quod et piscina illa aquam habebat, et tamen propter altitudinem marginis bibiturus non esset. Et experrecta sum, et cognovi fratrem meum laborare. Sed fidebam me profuturam labori ejus: et orabam pro eo omnibus diebus quousque transivimus in carcerem castrensem: munere enim castrensi eramus pugnaturi: natale tunc Getæ Cæsaris. Et feci pro illo orationem die et nocte gemens et lacrymans ut mihi donaretur. Die quo in nervo mansimus, ostensum est mihi hoc. Video locum illum quem videram, et Dinocraten mundo corpore, bene vestitum, refrigerantem; et ubi erat vulnus, video cicatricem: et piscinam illam quam retro videram, summisso margine usque ad umbilicum pueri; et aquam de ea trahebat sine cessatione: et super margine fiala aurea plena

aqua ; et accessit Dinocrates, et de ea bibere cœpit : quæ fiala non deficiebat. Et satiatus accessit de aqua ludere more infantium gaudens. Et expectata sum. Tunc intellexi translatum eum esse de pœna.”<sup>1</sup>

“A few days after, while we were all praying, suddenly in the middle of the prayer a voice spoke to me, and I uttered the name Dinocrates. And I was astonished that he had never occurred to my mind till then, and I was grieved as I remembered his misfortune. And at once I felt that I was worthy to pray for him, and that I ought to do so. Then I began to offer up earnest prayer for him, and to cry unto the Lord. That very next night there was shown to me this vision :—I saw Dinocrates coming out of a gloomy place, where were many other such places. He was very parched and thirsty, with his face dirty and pale ; and on his face was a wound, which he had at the time of his death. This was once Dinocrates, my seven-year-old brother after the flesh, who had died of disease, his face being so badly eaten with cancer that his death was abhorrent to all. For him therefore I had offered prayer. But between us was a great gulf, so that neither of us could approach the other. Then, in the place where Dinocrates was, there appeared a tank, whose edge was higher than the boy, and Dinocrates stretched himself up as though

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Robinson's *Texts and Studies*, vol. i, no. 2, pp. 72, 74.

to drink ; and I was distressed because, although the tank had water in it, yet he could not drink because of its height. So I woke up, and felt that my brother was in trouble ; but I trusted that my prayer would help him in his trouble, and I prayed for him every day until we removed into the camp prison—for we were to fight in the camp show, as it was the birthday of the Emperor Geta. So day and night I offered prayer for him with sighs and tears, that my petition might be granted. And on the day that we remained in fetters, this was shown to me :—I saw the same place that I had seen before, and Dinocrates, with his body now clean and well clad, refreshing himself ; and where the wound was, I saw only a scar. The tank that I had seen before was lowered as far as the boy's waist, and water was continually being drawn out of it, and on the edge of it was a golden cup full of water. Then Dinocrates came, and began to drink out of the cup, and the cup was never emptied ; and when he had had enough he went away happily to play, as children do ; and I awoke. Then I knew that he had been removed from the place of pain."

At this time in the same place lived Tertullian, who has left several references to the commemoration of the dead. His two works *De corona militis* and *De exhortatione castitatis* are assigned to A.D. 202–203. In the former (chapter iii) he describes various acts of Christian

worship and practice, and, having treated of Baptism and the Eucharist, he thus makes mention of prayer for the departed :—

“Oblationes pro defunctis pro natalitiis annua die facimus.”<sup>1</sup>

“On one day in each year we make offerings for the dead as birthday honours.”

In the latter (chapter xi) he endeavours to dissuade from digamy, attempting a *reductio ad absurdum* by alluding to a man's relations to his two wives in matters of religion :—

“In secundo matrimonio duæ uxores eundem circumstant maritum ; una spiritu, alia in carne : neque enim pristinam poteris odisse, cui etiam religiosiorem reservas affectionem, ut jam receptæ apud Dominum, pro cujus spiritu postulas, pro qua oblationes annuas reddis.”<sup>2</sup>

“If a second marriage has taken place, two wives beset the same husband, one in the spirit, the other in the flesh. You cannot hate the first, for you cherish for her an even more sacred affection, as having been now taken to be with the Lord ; and you pray for her soul, and every year make offerings for her.”

Again, in the *De monogamia* (chapter x), which is referred to about A.D. 217, Tertullian

<sup>1</sup> Migne, vol. ii, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 926.

sets forth what he considers to be the iniquity of widows marrying again, arguing that thus to put a new husband in the place of the deceased is practically a divorcing of the old one; whereas she cannot so act toward her first husband if she is truly a Christian, inasmuch as her religion demands that she should keep her first in mind and pray for him.

“Enimvero et pro anima ejus orat, et refrigerium interim adpostulat ei, et in prima resurrectione consortium, et offerat annuis diebus dormitionis ejus. Nam hæc nisi fecerit, vere repudiavit, quantum in ipsa est.”<sup>1</sup>

“For indeed she prays for his soul, and asks for him refreshment meanwhile, and fellowship with him in the first resurrection, and makes her offerings for him on the anniversaries of his death. For if she does not do so, she has really divorced him, as far as in her lies.”

Our third authority is Carthaginian too, for there are several passages that may be cited in defence of the practice from the writings of Cyprian, Archbishop of Carthage in the middle of the third century. In his *Epistle* 34, § 3, written A.D. 250, he is recommending Celerinus for ordination as a reader, and declares that he is worthy of his

<sup>1</sup> Migne, vol. ii, p. 942.

martyred kindred—his grandmother and two uncles—of whom he adds :—

“Sacrificia pro eis semper, ut meministis, offerimus quoties martyrum passiones et dies anniversaria commemoratione celebramus.”<sup>1</sup>

“As you remember, we always offer sacrifices for them whenever we hold our annual commemoration of the passions and days of the martyrs.”

*Epistle 37* belongs to the same date, and was addressed by Cyprian to his clergy, exhorting them to show all attentions to the confessors who were then in prison, and to note the dates of their deaths in order that they might be remembered each year on their anniversaries.

“Denique et dies eorum quibus excedunt annotate, ut commemorationes eorum inter memorias martyrum celebrare possimus . . . et celebrentur hic a nobis oblationes et sacrificia ob commemorationes eorum, quæ cito vobiscum, Domino protegente, celebrabimus.”<sup>2</sup>

“Finally also note the dates of their departure, that we may be able to commemorate them with the memorials of the martyrs; and that in place oblations and sacrifices may be offered by us in commemoration of them—which we will

<sup>1</sup> Migne, p. 323.

<sup>2</sup> Section 2. Migne, pp. 328, 329.



shortly do in conjunction with you, if the Lord preserves us."

Cyprian's *Epistle* 66 refers to the curious case of one Geminus Victor, deceased, who in defiance of the Church's rule had appointed as his executor a priest. He therefore directs that Victor's name is not to be mentioned in the prayers for the dead.

"Episcopi antecessores nostri . . . censuerunt . . . si quis hoc fecisset, non offeretur pro eo, nec sacrificium pro dormitione ejus celebraretur. Neque enim apud altare Dei meretur nominari in sacerdotum prece qui ab altari sacerdotes et ministros voluit avocare. Et ideo Victor . . . non est quod pro dormitione ejus apud vos fiat oblatio, aut deprecatio aliqua nomine ejus in ecclesia frequentetur."<sup>1</sup>

"Our episcopal predecessors ordained that if any one did so, there should be no oblation offered for him, no sacrifice for his repose. For no one who thought of calling away God's priests and ministers from his altar deserves to be mentioned there in the priests' prayer. Therefore you are not to make any oblation for Victor's repose, and no prayer is to be offered in his name in church."

Arnobius was a professor of rhetoric, living at Sicca in North Africa, within easy reach of Carthage, and there he wrote his remonstrance *Adversus Gentes* at the time of the Diocletian persecution

<sup>1</sup> Section 2. Migne, p. 399.

(c. A.D. 305). Therein (book iv, § 36) he reasons with the spoliators of the Church, arguing that they ought rather to have destroyed heathen books and theatres, which encouraged sin, than turn their rage against the harmless handiworks of the Christians.

“Nam nostra quidem scripta cur ignibus meruerunt dari? cur immaniter conventiculā dirui? in quibus summus oratur Deus, pax cunctis et venia postulatur magistratibus, exercitibus, regibus, familiaribus, inimicis, adhuc vitam degentibus, et resolutis corporum vincione.”<sup>1</sup>

“Why indeed did our books deserve to be cast into the fire, or our churches to be savagely destroyed? For there we pray to the most high God, and ask peace and pardon for all—magistrates, soldiers, kings, friends, enemies, those who are yet alive, and those who have been set free from the bondage of the body.”

Passing from Africa to Italy we are able to glean a rich store of evidence from the works of Ambrose, who was Archbishop of Milan from 374 to 397. The earliest is that contained in his *De excessu Satyri* (book i, chap. 80), a funeral discourse on his brother Satyrus (who died A.D. 379), which he closes with this prayer:—

“Tibi nunc, omnipotens Deus, innoxiam com-

<sup>1</sup> Migne's *Patrologia*, vol. v, p. 1076.

mendo animam, tibi hostiam meam offero : cape propitius ac serenus fraternum munus, sacrificium sacerdotis.”<sup>1</sup>

“To thee, O almighty God, I now commend his innocent soul ; to thee I present my sacrifice. Graciously and kindly accept a brother’s offering, the oblation of a priest.”

Among Ambrose’s *Epistles* is one addressed to his friend Faustinus on the death of his sister, in which he begs him not to mourn but rather to pray for her.<sup>2</sup>

“Itaque non tam deplorandam, quam prosequendam orationibus reor : nec mœstificandam lacrymis tuis, sed magis oblationibus animam ejus Domino commendandam arbitror.”<sup>3</sup>

“And so I think that she is not so much to be bewailed as to be followed by your prayers. She is not, I consider, to be saddened by your tears, but rather with offerings her soul is to be commended to the Lord.”

There are two other funeral orations of Ambrose, one delivered in honour of the Emperor Valentinian II (A.D. 392), and the other in honour of the Emperor Theodosius I (395). In his *De obitu Valentiniani Consolatio* he includes in his theme Valentinian’s

<sup>1</sup> Migne’s edition of Ambrose, vol. iii, p. 1315.

<sup>2</sup> *Epistle* 39, § 4.

<sup>3</sup> Migne, vol. iii, p. 1099.

brother Gratian, who had died nine years previously, having also worn the purple. Of him Ambrose says (chapter 80):—

“Date manibus sancta mysteria, pio requiem ejus poscamus affectu. Date sacramenta cælestia, animam nostris oblationibus prosequamur. Extollite populi mecum manus in sancta, ut eo saltem munere vicem ejus meritis rependamus.”<sup>1</sup>

“Offer ye your holy mysteries to the gods, while we with dutiful regard pray for his repose. Perform your heavenly rites, while we accompany his soul with our oblations. Together with me lift up your hands on high, O ye nations, that at least by such a duty we may make a return for his good deeds.”

Of Valentinian he speaks thus:—

“Credamus quia ascendit a deserto, hoc est, ex hoc arido et inculto loco ad illas florulentas delectationes, ubi cum fratre conjunctus æternæ vitæ fruitur voluptate. Beati ambo: si quid meæ orationes valebunt! nulla dies vos silentio præteribit. Nulla inhonoratos vos mea transibit oratio. Nulla nox non donatos aliqua precum mearum contexione transcurrent: omnibus vos oblationibus frequentabo.”<sup>2</sup>

“Let us believe that he has ascended from the wilderness—that is from this barren and desolate

<sup>1</sup> Ambrose, vol. iii, pp. 1375, 1376.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 1381.

place—to that pleasant and flowery land, where together with his brother he enjoys the delights of eternal life. Blessed are ye, both of you ; and if my intercession will at all help you, no day shall pass without your being mentioned, no prayer of mine shall leave you unhonoured, and no night shall run its course without granting you a place in my devotions ; and whenever I offer the sacrifice, I will commemorate you.”

And he closes his panegyric by this reference to the two (chapter 80) :—

“Te quæso, summe Deus, ut carissimos juvenes matura resurrectione suscites et resuscites ; ut immaturum hunc vitæ istius cursum maturiore suscitatione compenses.”<sup>1</sup>

“I beseech thee, O God most high, in the fulness of time to awaken these beloved youths at the resurrection, that by a speedy rising again Gratian may find compensation for the shortness of his life here.”

From Ambrose's other funeral oration, the *De obitu Theodosii Oratio*, which was pronounced over the emperor's body before its removal from Milan for interment at Constantinople, we quote this prayer for the repose of his soul :—

“Da requiem perfectam servo tuo Theodosio, requiem illam, quam præparasti sanctis tuis. Illo

<sup>1</sup> Ambrose, vol. iii, p. 1384.

convertatur anima ejus, unde descendit ; ubi mortis aculeum sentire non possit, ubi cognoscat mortem hanc non naturæ finem esse, sed culpæ." <sup>1</sup>

"Grant thy perfect rest to thy servant Theodosius, even that rest which thou hast prepared for thy saints. May his soul be brought back from the region to which it has gone down, to the land where he can feel no more the sting of death, and may realize that death is not the end of existence, but only of guilt."

Ambrose's death occurred on Good Friday 397, and his *Biography* was written by his secretary Paulinus, being specially indited for the information of Augustine. He describes how on Holy Saturday the body was taken into the great church of Milan, and on Easter morning the funeral service was performed.

"Lucescente die dominico, cum corpus ipsius peractis sacramentis divinis de ecclesia levaretur, portandum ad basilicam ambrosianam, in qua positus est." <sup>2</sup>

"Early on the Lord's Day, when after the celebration of the Holy Sacrament his body was borne out of the church to be carried to the Ambrosian basilica, where he was laid to rest."

Possibly, it being Easter Day, the Celebration was

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 36. *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 1397.

<sup>2</sup> Hurter's *Sanctorum Patrum Opuscula Selecta*, vol. vii, p. 43.

not a mass for the dead ; but in that case his name would certainly be commemorated in the service.

Most learned and most influential of all was Augustine, Archbishop of Hippo in North Africa, whose literary activity is comprised between A.D. 387 and 430, and his testimony in support of the practice of praying for the departed is most pronounced. We take first his *Confessions*, written in or about A.D. 397, in which<sup>1</sup> he describes his silent grief at the time of his mother Monica's burial.

“Cum ecce corpus elatum est, imus, redimus, sine lacrimis. Nam neque in eis precibus, quas tibi fudimus, cum offerretur pro ea sacrificium pretii nostri, jam juxta sepulchrum posito cadavere, priusquam deponeretur, sicut illic fieri solet, nec in eis ergo precibus fleui : sed toto die graviter in occulto mæstus eram.”<sup>2</sup>

“Lo ! when the body was borne forth we shed no tears, either going or returning. I did not weep during the prayers addressed to thee at the time that the sacrifice of our redemption was offered for her, when, before the interment, the body had been set before the grave, according to the local custom ; nor did I weep during the prayers at the interment ;

<sup>1</sup> Book ix, chap. 12, § 32.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii, p. 60, in Page and Rouse's *Loeb Classical Library*.

yet in secret I was deeply grieved throughout the whole day."

A little further on he touchingly and beautifully pleads for forgiveness for his mother, knowing that even she was not faultless.<sup>1</sup>

"Ego itaque . . . nunc pro peccatis matris meæ deprecor te ; exaudi me per medicinam vulnerum nostrorum, quæ pependit in ligno, et sedens ad dexteram tuam te interpellat pro nobis. Scio misericorditer operatam, et ex corde dimisisse debita debitoribus suis : dimitte et tu illi debita sua, si qua etiam contraxit per tot annos post aquam salutis, dimitte, Domine, dimitte, obsecro, ne intres cum ea in iudicium."<sup>2</sup>

"And so I beseech thee for my mother's sins. Hear me, through the healer of our wounds, who hung upon the tree ; and now that he sitteth at thy right hand, may he plead to thee for us. I know that she acted mercifully, and from her heart forgave her debtors their trespasses. Do thou also forgive her her trespasses, if she has indeed committed any during all the years since her baptism. Forgive, O Lord, forgive, I pray thee, and enter not into judgment with her."

Shortly afterwards he renews his intercessions :—

"Sit ergo in pace cum viro . . . Et inspira,

<sup>1</sup> Book ix, chap. 13, § 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; p. 66.



Domine meus, Deus meus, inspira servis tuis . . . ut quotquot hoc legerint, meminerint ad altare tuum Monicae, famulae tuae, cum Patricio, quondam ejus conjugis." <sup>1</sup>

"Therefore may she rest in peace with her husband. And, O my Lord and my God, inspire all thy servants who read these words, that they may remember thy handmaid Monica and her late husband Patricius at thine altar."

Augustine's pious remembrance of her was in full accord with her own request, as related in the *Confessions* <sup>2</sup>:—

"Namque illa imminente die resolutionis suae, non cogitavit suum corpus sumptuose contegi aut condi aromatis, aut monumentum electum concupivit aut curavit sepulchrum patrum: non ista mandavit nobis, sed tantummodo memoriam sui ad altare tuum fieri desideravit, cui nullius diei praeomissione servierat." <sup>3</sup>

"When the day of her dissolution was at hand she gave no thought to the robing of her body in costly array or to its being buried with sweet spices; she expressed no wish for a beautiful monument or that she might be laid in a family tomb. She gave no charge to us about such matters; but her sole desire was to be commemorated at thine altar,

<sup>1</sup> Book ix, p. 68.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 13, § 56.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; p. 66.

where she had never for a single day failed to attend."

Augustine's *Sermo* 172 is a brief homily on the text "We would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep,"<sup>1</sup> and deals with sorrow for the departed and religious rites performed on their behalf. Here is an extract therefrom:—

"Pompæ funeris, ægmina exsequiarum, sumptuosa diligentia sepulturæ, monumentorum opulenta constructio, vivorum sunt qualiacumque solatia, non adjutoria mortuorum. Orationibus vero sanctæ Ecclesiæ, et sacrificio salutari, et eleemosynis, quæ pro eorum spiritibus erogantur, non est dubitandum mortuos adjuvari; ut cum eis misericordius agatur a Domino, quam eorum peccata meruerunt. Hoc enim a patribus traditum, universa observat Ecclesia, ut pro eis qui in corporis et sanguinis Christi communione defuncti sunt, cum ad ipsum sacrificium loco suo commemorantur, oretur, ac pro illis quoque id offerri commemoretur."<sup>2</sup>

"Funeral display, numbers of services, expense lavished on burial, the building of costly tombs—all these in a measure afford consolation to the living, but they do not assist the dead. But beyond all doubt the dead are assisted by the prayers of holy Church, and by the saving sacrifice, and by alms,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thessalonians iv. 12.

<sup>2</sup> § 2, Migne, vol. xxxvii. *Augustine*, vol. v, p. 936.

which are bestowed for the good of their souls, that the Lord may deal with them more mercifully than their sins deserve. For this has been handed down by the fathers, and is observed by the whole Church, that prayer should be made for those who have died in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, when they are commemorated at the sacrifice in their own place, and that it should be mentioned that the sacrifice is offered for them."

In his *Enchiridion* (chap. 110) Augustine discusses the efficacy of the Christian sacrifice when offered for the dead :—

"Sacrificium altaris et eleemosynæ pro defunctis, quatenus et quibusnam prosint."

"To what extent and for what persons do the sacrifice of the altar and alms offered for the dead avail."

He first makes the broad statement :—

"Neque negandum est defunctorum animas pietate suorum viventium relevari, cum pro illis sacrificium Mediatoris offertur, vel eleemosynæ in Ecclesia fiunt."

"There is no denying that the souls of the dead are comforted through the devotion of their friends who survive, when the sacrifice of the Mediator is offered on their behalf, and alms are presented in church."

Then he differentiates various classes of good and bad, and sums up thus :—

“Cum ergo sacrificia sive altaris sive quarumcumque eleemosynarum pro baptizatis defunctis omnibus offeruntur, pro valde bonis gratiarum actiones sunt ; pro non valde malis propitiationes sunt ; pro valde malis etiamsi nulla sunt adjumenta mortuorum, qualescumque vivorum consolationes sunt. Quibus autem prosunt, aut ad hoc prosunt, ut sit plena remissio, aut certe ut tolerabilior fiat ipsa damnatio.”<sup>1</sup>

“Therefore when the sacrifices of the altar or any alms are offered for all the departed who have been baptized, they serve as thanksgivings in the case of those who were very good, and as atonements in the case of those who were not very wicked ; and in the case of those who were very wicked, although they are no help to the dead, yet these are some consolation to the living. And where they avail, they have the effect of either making the pardon perfect or at least of making the condemnation easier to bear.”

The treatise *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* sets forth the duty of according to the dead fitting burial rites and interment. This Augustine considers important, but much more so that the usual prayers should be offered for them, even though their names be not actually mentioned.

<sup>1</sup> Migne, *Augustine*, vol. vi, p. 283.

“Non sunt prætermittendæ supplicationes pro spiritibus mortuorum: quas faciendas pro omnibus in christiana et catholica societate defunctis etiam tacitis nominibus eorum sub generali commemoratione suscepit Ecclesia; ut quibus ad ista desunt parentes, aut filii, aut quicumque cognati vel amici, ab una eis exhibeantur pia matre communi. Si autem deessent istæ supplicationes, quæ fiunt recta fide ac pietate pro mortuis, puto quod nihil prodesset spiritibus eorum quamlibet in locis sanctis exanima corpora ponerentur.”<sup>1</sup>

“Intercessions for the souls of the dead must by no means be neglected. For the Church has undertaken that prayers should be offered for all who die as Christians and Catholics, to be included under one general commemoration if their actual names are not mentioned. The object of this is that in those cases where there are no parents or children, or any relations or friends, prayers may be offered for them by their one holy and common mother. But if there are no intercessions, such as are the natural outcome of real faith and devotion, my opinion is that their souls gain no benefit even though their dead bodies be laid in sacred places.”

Later on in the same work Augustine directs that all deceased believers should be commemorated whether good or bad, for we cannot discriminate certainly between saints and sinners:—

<sup>1</sup> Chap. 4, § 6. Migne, *Augustine*, vol. vi, p. 596.

“Quæ cum ita sunt, non estimemus ad mortuos, pro quibus curam gerimus, pervenire, nisi quod pro eis sive altaris, sive orationum, sive eleemosynarum sacrificiis solemniter supplicamus : quamvis non pro quibus fiunt omnibus prosint, sed iis tantum quibus dum vivunt, comparatur ut prosint. Sed quia non discernimus qui sint, oportet ea pro regeneratis omnibus facere, ut nullus eorum prætermittatur, ad quos hæc beneficia possint et debeant pervenire. Melius enim supererunt ista eis quibus nec obsunt nec prosunt, quam eis deerunt quibus prosunt.”<sup>1</sup>

“This being so, we must not think that the dead, on whom we lavish our care, can derive any benefit except from our religious observances in the offering of the Eucharist and prayers and alms. And yet these do not avail for all those for whom they are offered, but only for those for whom it was so ordained during their lifetime. But because we are not able to determine which ones these are, we ought to offer for all the regenerated without exception, who may or ought to derive such benefit. For it is better that there should be a superfluity of offerings made on behalf of those who are neither harmed nor helped by them, than that those who might be assisted should be without them.”

In several passages Augustine deals specially with the subject as far as it affects the souls of

<sup>1</sup> Migne, *Augustine*, chap. 18, § 22. *Ibid.*, vol. vi, p. 609.

martyrs, who are not to be regarded in the devotions in the same way as others. Thus in his *Tractatus* 84 on *St. John's Gospel*<sup>1</sup> he says :—

“ Ideo quippe ad ipsam mensam non sic eos commemoramus, quemadmodum alios qui in pace requiescunt ut etiam pro eis oremus, sed magis ut ipsi pro nobis, ut eorum vestigiis adhæreamus : quia impleverunt ipsi caritatem, quia Dominus dixit non posse esse majorem.”

“ And so, although we commemorate them at the altar, we do not do so in the same way as we commemorate others who are resting in peace ; the object being not that we should pray for them, but rather that they should pray for us, that we may follow in their footsteps ; for they have filled up the measure of love, and the Lord has said that it cannot be made greater.”

This teaching is more strongly expressed in his *Sermo*, No. 17 (*Library of the Fathers*, *St. Augustine on St. John*, vol. ii, p. 842, note) :—

“ Injuria est pro martyre orare, cujus nos debemus orationibus commendari.”

“ It is wrong to pray for a martyr, for we ought rather to be assisted by his prayers.”

And in the *De civitate Dei*,<sup>2</sup> speaking of the

<sup>1</sup> Hurter's *Sanctorum Patrum Opuscula Selecta*, series ii, tom. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Book xx, chap. 9, § 2 ; *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. xl, p. 451.

souls of the martyrs, who are to reign with Christ for a thousand years before the resurrection of the body, he adds :—

“Neque enim piorum animæ mortuorum separantur ab ecclesia, quæ nunc etiam est regnum Christi. Alioquin nec ad altare Dei fieret eorum memoria in communicatione corporis Christi.”

“For the souls of the holy dead are not parted from the Church, which even now is the kingdom of Christ ; otherwise they would not be commemorated at God’s altar when Christ’s body is distributed.”

Lastly, in his *De hæresibus*<sup>1</sup> Augustine combats the heretical tenets of the Aërians, and thus defines the peculiar views of the founder of the sect :—

“Fertur . . . in Arianorum hæresim lapsus, propria quoque dogmata addidisse nonnulla, dicens offerri pro dormientibus non oportere.”

“He is said to have fallen into the heresy of the Arians, and to have added to it certain doctrines of his own, saying that there ought to be no offering for those who are asleep.”

The Third Council of Carthage, held in A.D. 397, fully recognises the pious custom, Canon 29 containing this reference :—

“Si . . . defunctorum . . . commendatio facienda est, solis orationibus fiat, si illi qui faciunt, jam pransi inveniantur.”

<sup>1</sup> Chap. 53. Migne, *Augustine*, vol. viii, p. 40.



“When there is to be a service for the dead, prayers only are to be offered, if the ministers are found to have already broken their fast.”<sup>1</sup>

Our next testimony is that of Paulinus of Nola in Campania, who in A.D. 398 addressed his *Epistle* 35 to Delphinus, Bishop of Bordeaux, commending to his prayers his deceased brother and himself.

“Sed potius ut orationibus tuis condonetur tibi, ut et illius animam vel de minimo sanctitatis tuæ digito distillans refrigerii gutta respergat et nobis, dum tempus est, recurrentibus ad te et clamantibus : Pater, peccavimus in cælum et in te ; jam non sumus digni vocari filii tui, pro confessione peccati divina miseratio te interveniente succurrat.”<sup>2</sup>

“But rather that in answer to your prayers it may be granted you that his soul may be refreshed, as it were by a drop of water from your lordship’s little finger ; and that by your intercession, we on confessing our sins may obtain God’s compassion, if we come to you, ere it be too late, and cry, ‘Father, we have sinned against heaven and against thee, and are no more worthy to be called thy sons.’”

We pass on to the Epistles of Evodius, Bishop of Uzalis near Utica in North Africa. *Epistle* 158

<sup>1</sup> Mansi’s *Sanctorum Conciliorum Collectio*, vol. iii, p. 885.

<sup>2</sup> *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. xxix, 313.

(al. 258), addressed to Augustine about A.D. 414, records the death and the funeral of his young secretary, in which (§ 2) occurs this passage :—

“Exsequias præbuimus satis honorabiles, et dignas tantæ animæ ; nam per triduum hymnis Dominum collaudavimus super sepulchrum ipsius, et redemptionis Sacramenta tertio die obtulimus.”<sup>1</sup>

“We honoured him with a splendid funeral, one worthy of so good a man ; for over his grave for a period of three days we sang hymns in praise of the Lord, and on the third day we offered for him the sacrament of our redemption.”

In the *Collatio* 2 of John Cassian of Marseilles (A.D. 420–429) we have mention of one Hero, who had lived as a recluse for fifty years, and then had “*illusione diaboli*” cast himself down from a height and killed himself. For this he was nearly being deprived of the usual prayers for the deceased.<sup>2</sup>

“*Quamobrem pro meritis laborum tantorum et annorum numerositate qua in eremo perduravit hoc miseratione et humilitate summa ab his qui ejus compatiabantur exitio vix a presbytero Abbate Pafnutio potuit obtineri, ut non inter biathanatos reputatus etiam memoria et oblatione pausantium judicaretur indignus.*”

<sup>1</sup> Migne, *Augustine*, vol. ii, p. 694.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 5. *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. xiii, p. 45.

“On account of this, although he deserved much for his great labours and the number of years that he had spent in the desert, such was his wretched misfortune that those who sympathized with him in his death, had difficulty in persuading Abbot Pafnutius the priest that he should not be accounted as a suicide and unworthy to enjoy the commemoration and offering accorded to those who die.”

The biography of the great Augustine was written about A.D. 430 by his friend Possidius, Bishop of Calama in Numidia, who, after describing Augustine's death, gives this account of his funeral :—

“Nobis coram pro ejus commendanda corporis depositione sacrificium Deo oblatum est, et sepultus est.”<sup>1</sup>

“The sacrifice for the burial of his body was offered up to God in our presence, and then he was interred.”

Victor Vitensis, the North African bishop and writer, in his *De Persecutione Africana*, about A.D. 486, complains of the cruelty of the Vandal persecutors, because by depriving the Catholics of their clergy, they cut them off from the celebration of the ordinances of religion. The following passage in Book ii is couched in the form of a plaint addressed to the clergy :—

<sup>1</sup> *Vita S. Augustini*, chap. 31. Migne, *Augustine*, vol. i p. 64.

“Qui hos baptizaturi sunt parvulos fontis aquæ perennis? qui nobis pœnitentiæ munus collaturi sunt et reconciliationis indulgentia obstrictos peccatorum vinculis soluturi? quia vobis dictum est :— Quæcumque solveritis super terram, erunt soluta et in cælis. Qui nos sollemnibus orationibus sepulturi sunt morientes? a quibus divini sacrificii ritus exhibendus est consuetus?”<sup>1</sup>

“Who will baptize our little ones in the spring of living water? Who will minister to us the benefit of penitence, and by the grace of reconciliation set free those who are bound by the chain of their sins? For to you it was said :—‘Whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.’ Who will bury us with the appointed prayers when we die? and who will perform the accustomed rites of the divine sacrifice?”

In the city of Tours lived a widow who had daily mass celebrated in a church where her husband’s body was buried. Gregory, who was Archbishop of Tours at the time (A.D. 588), tells us of her case, referring thus to it in his *De gloria Confessorum*.<sup>2</sup>

“Mulier vero per annum integrum ad hoc templum degens, assidue orationi vacabat, celebrans quotidie missarum solemnina, et offerens oblationem pro

<sup>1</sup> *Monumenta Germaniæ Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi*, vol. iii, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. 65.

memoria viri : non diffusa de Domini misericordia, quod haberet defunctus requiem.”<sup>1</sup>

“For a whole year a certain woman resorted to this church, and gave herself up continually to prayer ; and she had mass celebrated every day, and made offerings in memory of her husband, trusting that in the mercy of the Lord the departed would find repose.”

Again, in his *Vitæ Patrum* (chap. 13) Gregory thus mentions the funeral of one Lupicinus, Abbot of St. Claudius in the Jura Mountains, who died about A.D. 480 :—

“Usque ad Transaliacensem vicum venientes, celebratis missis, beatum corpus cum summo honore gaudioque sepelierunt.”<sup>2</sup>

“And when they had reached the Transaliansian village they celebrated masses and buried his blessed remains with very great honour and rejoicing.”

We close our series with Gregory the Great, Archbishop of Rome from A.D. 590 to 604, who in his *Dialogues* (bk. iv) has two references to masses being offered for the dead, which show conclusively that the practice was fully established as a normal custom in his time. The first tells of a certain priest, who had an apparition of a man requesting

<sup>1</sup> Migne, vol. lxxi, p. 875.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1067.

him to offer the holy sacrifice on his behalf ; which he did daily for a week, until it was revealed to him that the deceased had obtained forgiveness.

“Si autem mihi præstare vis, omnipotenti Deo pro me offer hunc panem, ut pro peccatis meis intervenias. . . . Idem vero presbyter hebdomada continua se pro eo in lacrymis afflixit, salutarem hostiam quotidie obtulit.”<sup>1</sup>

“If you would assist me, offer to Almighty God this bread for me as an intercession for my sins. And the priest wept for him for a whole week, and each day offered the sacrifice of salvation.”

The other passage (*ibid.*, p. 468) relates how Gregory instructed one Abbot Pretiosus to offer a trigitale for a dead man.

“Diu est quod frater ille qui defunctus est, in igne cruciatur: debemus ei aliquid caritatis impendere, et eum in quantum possumus, ut eripatur, adjuvare. Vade itaque, et ab hodierna die diebus triginta continuis offerre pro eo sacrificium stude, ut nullus omnino prætermittatur dies, quo pro absolutione illius hostia salutaris non immoletur. Qui protinus abscessit, et dictis paruit.”

“It is now a long while that the deceased brother has been tortured in the fire. We ought to show him some loving-kindness, and as far as we can, assist his deliverance. So go, and starting from

<sup>1</sup> Migne, vol. lxxvii; p. 417.

to-day, diligently offer sacrifice for him for thirty days, without omitting a single day on which the saving Host is not sacrificed for his pardon. And he went forthwith, and obeyed the instructions."

We might easily extend this catena of testimony, quoting from such authorities as Boniface and Lullus and Amalarius, or others ; but we have here brought together sufficient evidence to prove that in the Western Church from about the year 200 A.D. —before which date there was very little patristic literature of any kind—devotions for the departed, and especially the sacrifice of the altar, were regarded as right in principle and as the natural and usual expression of Christian love and faith and hope.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE TESTIMONY OF THE LITURGIES.

THE evidence in favour of prayers for the departed that is to be derived from the liturgies is from its very nature evidence of an especially weighty character. Individual authors indeed may in their writings display merely their own peculiar, and perchance erroneous, opinions; which, however exalted may be their own position in the Church or however deep their learning, do not necessarily reflect the teaching of the whole body or bind the Church to accept their views. But prayers are not incorporated into liturgies and taken into public use without due consideration; and when we find prominence given in any liturgy to such a practice as praying for the departed, we are justified in inferring that in the region where that liturgy was in use, the local Church had stamped with its approval that particular practice as being both right and profitable.

And such evidence is not only strikingly unanimous—prayers for the departed occupying



a prominent position in every ancient or mediæval liturgy now extant—but its range both in place and time is so extensive as practically to include the whole Church in all her branches, whether orthodox or separated, from the third century onwards. The words of Renaudot in his great work on *Eastern Liturgies* are not to be refuted:—

“Si quidquam antiquissima omnium Ecclesiarum traditione stabilitum apud Christianos, et observatum est, commemoratio defunctorum fuit ad altare Dei inter sacrorum mysteriorum celebrationem. Illam consuetudinem sua ætate ubique observatam, jam a veteri disciplina omniumque consensu confirmatam testatur Augustinus pluribus in locis, consentientesque habet veteres Patres omnes. Officia quoque antiquissima, non ea modo quæ huc usque usurpantur sed Gottica, Gallicana, Mosarabica, Ambrosiana, Græcæque Liturgicæ, commemorationis illius formas exhibent, quæ cum Orientalibus Copticis, Æthiopicis, Syriacis cujuscumque ritus Liturgiis, perfecte consentiunt, nihil ut sit, de quo dubitari, aut in quo novitatem suspicari minus queat. Oratur autem Deus, ut fidelium defunctorum animas quiescere jubeat in sinu Abraham, Isaac et Jacob; inter Patriarchas, Prophetas, et Martyres, inter choros Sanctorum suorum, in paradiso voluptatis et deliciarum, unde fugit dolor et gemitus.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Liturgiarum orientalium collectio Renaudotii*, vol. ii, p. 103.

“If there was one custom which according to the oldest tradition of all the Churches was firmly established and commonly practised among Christians, that was the commemoration of the dead in the performance of divine service at God’s altar. In many passages of his writings Augustine bears witness that the custom was everywhere followed by his own generation, and was already confirmed by ancient rule and general agreement, and in this all the fathers of old time support him. And furthermore the earliest liturgies, not only those that are now in use, but also the Gothic, the Gallican, the Mozarabic, the Ambrosian, and the several Greek ones, contain similar commemorations ; and together with the Eastern liturgies, Coptic, Æthiopic, and the various ones classed as Syrian, all these are in full agreement that on this matter there can be no room for doubt, or any suspicion of interpolation. For prayer is offered to God, that he would be pleased to grant to the souls of the faithful departed rest in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together with the patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, and all the company of his saints, in that happy and delightful paradise, whence sorrow and sighing have fled away.”

In proof of this I proceed to set forth the catena of quotations from the various liturgies, which show the place that the departed had at the altar in the public services of the Church ; and in this

I follow the classification and order of the liturgies as they are arranged by Mr. Brightman in his *Liturgies Eastern and Western*.

First, then, the Eastern. Of those belonging to the Syrian rite the chief is the so-called *Clementine Liturgy* from the *Apostolic Constitutions*, whose use extended over Palestine and Syria and probably into other lands. In its eucharistic prayer intercessions were offered up for the holy Church, for the king and all in authority, for the army, for the holy dead, for 'this people,' for virgins, for widows, for the sick, for prisoners, &c., the petition for the departed running thus :—

Ἐπι προσφέρονέν σοι καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων τῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος εὐαρεστησάντων σοι ἀγίων πατριαρχῶν προφητῶν δικαίων ἀποστόλων μαρτύρων ὁμολογητῶν ἐπισκόπων πρεσβυτέρων διακόνων ὑποδιακόνων ἀναγνωστῶν ψαλτῶν παρθένων χηρῶν λαϊκῶν καὶ πάντων ὧν ἐπίστασαι αὐτὸς τὰ ὀνόματα.<sup>1</sup>

"Further we offer unto thee also on behalf of all those who from the beginning have been well-pleasing to thee—saints, patriarchs, prophets, righteous men, apostles, martyrs, confessors, bishops, priests, deacons, sub-deacons, readers, harpists, virgins, widows, lay people, and all others whose names thou knowest."

Here too may be quoted the suffrage from the

<sup>1</sup> F. E. Brightman's *Liturgies*, vol. i, p. 21.

“proclamatio diaconi” in the *Testamentum Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, which is so closely allied to the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and which seems to belong to the middle of the third century :—

“Supplicemus Dominum, Deum salvatoremque nostrum Jesum Christum. . . . Pro defunctis, qui ab ecclesia migrarunt, supplicemus, ut Dominus iis locum quietis concedat.”<sup>1</sup>

“Let us beseech the Lord, our God and Saviour Jesus Christ . . . Let us beseech the Lord on behalf of the dead, who have departed from the Church, that he would grant them a place of rest.”

And to these may be added the following from the Intercession in the *Liturgy of Palestine* of the fourth century, as it is preserved in the *Catecheses* of St. Cyril of Jerusalem :—

Μνημονεύομεν καὶ τῶν προκεκοιμημένων πρῶτον πατριαρχῶν προφητῶν ἀποστόλων μαρτύρων ὅπως ὁ Θεὸς ταῖς εὐχαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ πρεσβείαις προσδέξηται ἡμῶν τὴν δέησιν· εἶτα καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν προκεκοιμημένων ἀγίων πατέρων καὶ ἐπισκόπων καὶ πάντων ἀπλῶς τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν προκεκοιμημένων.<sup>2</sup>

“We commemorate also those who have fallen asleep, firstly patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, asking God to receive our request for their

<sup>1</sup> Rahmani's edition of the *Testamentum*, p. 87; A. J. Mason's *Purgatory*, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Renaudot, vol. i, p. 466.

prayers and intercessions ; and then for saints and fathers and bishops, and for every one of our own body who has fallen asleep."

The Diptychs of Jerusalem, written for use at Sinai in the *Liturgy of St. James*,<sup>1</sup> comprise a list of emperors, patriarchs, and many in holy and in minor orders, who are to be prayed for ; and they conclude with the comprehensive sentence :—

Καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐν πίστει καὶ σφραγίδι Χριστοῦ προκεκοιμημένων φιλοχρίστων ὀρθοδόξων λαϊκῶν.<sup>2</sup>

" And for all the devoted and believing laity, who have fallen asleep in the faith and with the seal of Christ."

In the *Liturgy of St. James* occurs first in the deacon's general litany this brief supplication :—

Ὑπὲρ ἀναπαύσεως τῶν προκεκοιμημένων πατέρων τε καὶ ἀδελφῶν τοῦ Κυρίου δεήθωμεν.<sup>3</sup>

And later the celebrant offers this beautiful prayer :—

Μνήσθητι Κύριε ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκὸς ὧν ἐμνήσθημεν καὶ ὧν οὐκ ἐμνήσθημεν ὀρθοδόξων ἀπὸ Ἀβελ τοῦ δικαίου μέχρι τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας. αὐτὸς ἐκεῖ αὐτοὺς ἀνάπαυσον ἐν χώρᾳ ζώντων, ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου, ἐν τῇ τρυφῇ τοῦ παραδείσου, ἐν τοῖς κόλποις Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων ἡμῶν, ὅθεν ἀπέδρα ὁδὴν λύπη καὶ στεναγμός,

<sup>1</sup> c. A.D. 1166. <sup>2</sup> Renaudot, vol. i, p. 502. <sup>3</sup> Brightman, p. 47.

ἐνθα ἐπισκοπεῖ τὸ φῶς τοῦ προσώπου σου καὶ κατα-  
λάμπει διὰ παντός.<sup>1</sup>

“Let us entreat the Lord for the repose of our fathers and brethren who have fallen asleep.”  
“Remember, O Lord our God, all the souls of the believers, both those whom we remember and those whom we remember not, from righteous Abel even to the present time. Do thou grant them rest there in the land of the living, in thy kingdom, in the delightful paradise, in the bosom of our holy fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whence all pain and sorrow and sighing have fled away, and where the light of thy countenance appeareth and shineth for evermore.”

Here is another from the *Syriac Liturgy of St. James* (Monophysite) as translated by Renaudot :—<sup>2</sup>

“Iterum etiam commemoramus omnes defunctos fideles, qui in fide vera defuncti sunt, ex altari hoc sancto, et ex hoc pago, et ex quacumque regione, qui in fide vera pridem obdormientes quieverunt, et ad te Deum Dominum spirituum et omnis carnis pervenerunt. Rogamus, imploramus, et deprecamur Christum Deum nostrum, qui suscepit ad se animas et spiritus eorum, ut per miserationes suas multas præstet illos dignos venia delictorum et remissione peccatorum: nosque et illos pervenire faciat ad regnum suum in cælis.”

<sup>1</sup> Brightman, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii, p. 36.

“Again also we commemorate all the holy dead, who, having ministered at this holy altar or dwelt in this part or in any other country, have departed in the true faith, and falling asleep in time past have gone to their rest, and have come to thee, O God, the Lord of spirits and of all flesh. We pray, we beseech, we entreat Christ our God, who hath taken their souls to himself, that of his bounteous mercy he would grant them pardon and remission of all their sins, and would bring us and them to his heavenly kingdom.”

From the *Liturgy of St. Dionysius*, Bishop of Athens, we cull this beautiful prayer :—

“Memento Domine omnium defunctorum qui decubuerunt cum spe tua, in fide vera : præsertim vero et nominatim, patrum, fratrum, magistrorumque nostrorum, corporalium aut spiritualium, et eorum pro quibus et quorum gratia oblatio hæc sancta oblata est. Adjunge Domine nomina illorum cum nominibus sanctorum tuorum in habitatione beata eorum qui festum agunt et lætantur in te ; non revocans illis memoriam peccatorum suorum, neque commemorans ipsis quæ insipienter egerunt ; quia nullus est carni alligatus, et innocens coram te.”<sup>1</sup>

“Remember, O Lord, all the dead who, hoping in thee, have fallen asleep in the true faith, especially and particularly our fathers, our brethren, and our

<sup>1</sup> Renaudot, vol. ii, p. 208.

rulers, whether temporal or spiritual, and all those in whose name or on whose behalf this holy sacrifice has been offered. Number them, O Lord, with thy saints, who in their abode of bliss are rejoicing and delighting in thee. Remind them not of their sins, and make no mention of their foolish deeds—for no one born in the flesh is faultless in thy sight.”

In the *Liturgy of the Syrian Jacobites* the dead are again and again remembered at the altar. One such passage is the closing portion of the deacon’s commemoration :—

“We commemorate all the faithful departed who from this holy altar and this town and this place and from all places and quarters have departed, even those who in the belief of the truth have aforetime fallen asleep and are at rest and have attained unto thee, O God, the Lord of spirits and of all flesh. Let us pray and intercede and beseech Christ our God, who hath received their souls and spirits unto himself, to vouchsafe them in his great mercies pardon of sins, and to bring us and them to his heavenly kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>

Another occurs in the priest’s prayer after the fraction and consignation :—

“The departed who are severed from us and have passed from this world, grant rest, O Christ, to their spirits with the righteous and the just : let thy cross

<sup>1</sup> Renaudot, vol. ii; p. 95.



be a bridge to them, and thy baptism a covering : thy Body and holy Blood a way to lead them to the kingdom.”<sup>1</sup>

We pass on to the Egyptian rite, and first to the *Liturgy of St. Mark*. Here, when the deacon has read the list of the names of the departed, the priest prays thus :—

Τούτων πάντων τὰς ψυχὰς ἀνάπαυσον δέσποτα Κύριε ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἁγίων σου σκηναῖς, ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου, χαριζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν σου ἀγαθὰ ἃ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν καὶ οὖς οὐκ ἤκουσεν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπων οὐκ ἀνέβη ἃ ἡτοίμασας ὁ Θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσι τὸ ὄνομά σου τὸ ἅγιον. Αὐτῶν μὲν τὰς ψυχὰς ἀνάπαυσον καὶ βασιλείας οὐρανῶν καταξίωσον.<sup>2</sup>

“To the souls of all these, O Lord our God, grant rest in thy kingdom in the tabernacles of thy saints. Enrich them with thy promised blessings, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which thou, O God, hast prepared for them that love thy holy Name. Grant rest to their souls, and count them worthy of thy heavenly kingdom.”

Akin to this last is the *Prayer Book of Sarapion*, Bishop of Thmuis in Egypt, assigned by Bishop Wordsworth to about A.D. 350, in which, after the consecration, occurs this prayer :—

<sup>1</sup> Renaudot, vol. ii, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; p. 129.

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Παρακαλούμεν δὲ καὶ ὑπὲρ πάντων τῶν κεκοιμημένων, ὧν ἐστὶν καὶ ἡ ἀνάμνησις μετὰ τὴν ὑποβολὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων. Ἀγιάσον πάσας τὰς ἐν Κυρίῳ κοιμηθείσας. Καὶ συγκαταρίθμησον πάσαις ταῖς ἁγίαις σου δυνάμεσιν καὶ δὸς αὐτοῖς τόπον καὶ μονὴν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου.<sup>1</sup>

“We pray also for all that are fallen asleep, whose names are commemorated in the list. Sanctify their souls, for thou knowest them all. Sanctify all those who have fallen asleep in the Lord, and number them with all thy holy and great ones, and give them a place and mansion in thy kingdom.”

The book contains, too, a prayer for one departed whose body is about to be carried out to burial :—

Ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ζωῆς καὶ θανάτου τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἔχων, ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ δεσπότης πάσης σαρκός, Θεὸς ὁ θανατῶν καὶ ζωογονῶν, ὁ κατὰ γων καὶ πύλας ᾄδου καὶ ἀνάγων . . . δεόμεθά σου περὶ τῆς κοιμήσεως καὶ ἀναπαύσεως τοῦ δούλου σου ἢ τῆς δούλης σου τῆσδε τὴν ψυχὴν, τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἀνάπαισον ἐν τόποις χλόης, ἐν ταμείοις ἀναπαύσεως μετὰ Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων σου. Τὸ δὲ σῶμα ἀνάστησον ἐν ᾗ ὥρισας ἡμέρα κατὰ τὰς ἀψευδεῖς σου ἐπαγγελίας, ἵνα καὶ τὰς κατ’ ἀξίαν αὐτῷ κληρονομίας ἀποδῷς ἐν ταῖς ἁγίαις σου νομαῖς. Τῶν παραπτωμάτων αὐτοῦ καὶ ἁμαρτημάτων μὴ μνησθῆς τὴν δὲ ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ εἰρηνικὴν καὶ εὐλογημένην εἶναι ποίησον τὰς λύπας τῶν διαφερόντων πνεύματι παρακλήσεως ἴασαι καὶ ἡμῖν πᾶσι τέλος ἀγαθὸν δώρησαι διὰ τοῦ

<sup>1</sup> G. Wobbermin's edition, chap. I, p. 6.

μονογενοῦς σου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, δι' οὗ σοὶ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος ἐν ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.<sup>1</sup>

“O God, who hast power over life and death, the God of spirits and Lord of all flesh, who killest and makest alive, who bringest down even to the grave and bringest up . . . We pray thee to grant the sleep of peace to this thy servant. May his soul enjoy rich repose in green places with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all thy saints. Raise up his body in the day that thou hast appointed according to thy never-failing promises, and give him his due inheritance in thy holy pastures. Remember not his transgressions and sins, and make his departure to be peaceful and blessed. Heal the grief of those who belong to him with the spirit of consolation, and grant unto us all a good end through thy only-begotten Jesus Christ, through whom to thee be glory and might in the Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen.”

In the *Liturgy of the Coptic Jacobites* there is much that is common to the prayer for the departed in the *Liturgy of St. Mark* and that in the *Book of Bishop Sarapion*. This is made clear by the following extract:—

“These who have fallen asleep and have gone to their rest in the faith of Christ, vouchsafe to grant rest to all their souls in the bosom of our holy fathers,

<sup>1</sup> G. Wobbermin's edition, chap. xviii, p. 14.

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Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Nourish them in a place of pasturage beside the waters of comfort, in the paradise of joy, whence sorrow and sighing and weeping have fled away, in the light of thy saints. Raise up their flesh also in the day which thou hast appointed according to thy true promises that cannot lie. Grant them the good things of thy promises, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of men, the things which thou, O God, hast prepared for them that love thy holy Name. . . . To those, O Lord, whose souls thou hast taken, grant rest : may they be counted worthy of the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

The following is from the *Æthiopic Liturgy*, a mere brief re-echo of the Coptic :—

“ Remember, O Lord, all those who have fallen asleep, and have gone to their rest in the faith of Christ, and gather their souls in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly brief but equally definite are the references in the *Liturgy of the Abyssinian Jacobites* :—

“ Remember, O Lord, our fathers and brethren who have fallen asleep and are gone to their rest in the orthodox faith : give them rest ; ”  
and again, in the intercession after the Anaphora :—

<sup>1</sup> Brightman, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> Renandot's *Liturgiarum Orientalium Collectio*, vol. i, p. 492.

“ Rest the souls of our fathers and our brothers and our sisters, who have fallen asleep and gained their rest in the faith of Christ : rest them.” <sup>1</sup>

In the Persian rite, the *Liturgy of the Nestorians*, one of the most remarkable features is the lengthy diptychs, containing the names of some hundreds of deceased persons, for all of whom the celebrant prays that “ this offering may be accepted for ever.” <sup>2</sup> Their commemoration is preceded by the deacons’ bidding :—

“ Pray for the memorial of our fathers the catholici and bishops, and of all presbyters and deacons and young men and virgins, and of all who have departed and passed from this world in the belief of the truth, and of all our fathers and brethren, of all our sons and daughters, and of all faithful and Christ-loving kings, and of all prophets and apostles, and of all martyrs and confessors of this and every place : that God would crown them in the resurrection from the dead, and give us with them a good hope and a portion and an inheritance and life in the kingdom of heaven.” <sup>3</sup>

The remaining section of the Oriental liturgies comprises those belonging to the Byzantine rite,

<sup>1</sup> Renaudot, vol. i, pp. 221, 229.      <sup>2</sup> Brightman, p. 282.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

first of which are the *Liturgies of St. Basil and St. Chrysostom* (ninth century). In these we find this intercession for the departed :—

Μνήσθητι πάντων τῶν κεκοιμημένων ἐν ἐλπίδι ἀναστάσεως ζωῆς αἰωνίου καὶ ἀνάπαυσον αὐτοὺς ὅπου ἐπισκοπεῖ τὸ φῶς τοῦ προσώπου σου.<sup>1</sup>

“Remember all those who have fallen asleep in hope of the resurrection to eternal life, and grant them rest in the place where the light of thy countenance regardeth them.”

The *Liturgy of the Armenians* is very rich in references to the departed as still being members of the Church. Thus in the litany the deacon proclaims :—

“Again in peace let us beseech the Lord . . . For the souls of them that rest in death, who are fallen asleep in Christ in the true and orthodox faith, let us beseech the Lord ; ”

and the clerks respond,

“Lord, remember and have mercy.”<sup>2</sup>

In the Eucharistic intercession occurs this paragraph :—

“Through this give rest to all those who aforetime have fallen asleep in Christ, to our forefathers, to the patriarchs, prophets, apostles,

<sup>1</sup> Brightman, p. 332.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

martyrs, bishops, presbyters, deacons, and the whole clergy of thy holy Church, and to all laity, men and women, who have died in the faith.”<sup>1</sup>

And a little later the deacons proclaim:—

“ We beseech that in this holy sacrifice remembrance be made of all the faithful in general, men and women, old men and children, and of all of every age who are fallen asleep in Christ in faith and holiness.”<sup>2</sup>

And again, while the deacons continue to sing,

“ Let us also beseech and entreat for the souls of those who are at rest, and especially for our departed prelates, for the founders of this holy church and for all those who rest under the shadow thereof . . . and for the rest of those who have died in Christ in faith and holiness,”

the priest says this prayer privately,

“ Remember, O Lord, and have mercy and have pity on the souls of the departed : give them rest and light, and rank them among thy saints in thy kingdom of heaven, and make them worthy of thy mercy.”<sup>3</sup>

In the *Egyptian Liturgy of the Arabic Didascalia*, cap. 38, appears this direction in the “ Mass of the Faithful ” :—

<sup>1</sup> Brightman, p. 440.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; p. 442.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 443.

“They shall pray for the sick and those abroad and those in distress, and for the weather and for the fruits, and for kings and them that are in high places, and for them that have fallen asleep, and them that have repented and do benefit to the Church : and they shall pray also for the catechumens, and for the peace of the universal Church, and for the bishop and for the clergy, and for the assembly of the congregation.”<sup>1</sup>

This is a strangely assorted list of topics for prayer, but at least it is no secondary place that is assigned to the departed, and their right to the intercession of the faithful is fully recognised.

Last of the Oriental liturgies we notice that of Malabar, one of those tainted by the Nestorian heresy. In this appear several times prayers for the Church at rest. We have this in the deacon’s litany :—

“Let us remember also our fathers and our brethren who have departed out of this world in the orthodox faith ; let us pray, I say, to the Lord that he may absolve them, and may forgive them their offences, and may vouchsafe that they, with all just and righteous men who have obeyed the divine will, may rejoice for ever and ever.”<sup>2</sup>

Again, here is the deacon’s prayer after the Creed :—

<sup>1</sup> Brightman, p. 510.

<sup>2</sup> Neale and Littledale’s *Translation of Liturgies*, p. 151.



“Pray, bearing in memory our fathers, the Catholics, and all presbyters and deacons, youths and virgins, and all the faithful who have departed from the living and are dead in the true faith. And all our fathers and brethren, and sons and daughters; also faithful kings beloved of Christ, and all prophets, apostles, and martyrs: let us pray, I say, that in the resurrection from the dead they may be rewarded by God with the crown, with a good hope, and the inheritance of the life of the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>1</sup>

And finally before the Anaphora the priest prays thus:—

“For patriarchs, bishops, presbyters and deacons, and for those who, having accomplished this life, have departed out of this congregation of the Church.”<sup>2</sup>

From the East we now turn to the West, and collect from the various Western liturgies evidences of the prevalence of prayers for the departed.

Investigations into the early history of the Roman Missal prove that the ‘Memento for the Departed,’ which is set between the act of consecration and the priest’s communion, is an exceedingly ancient feature of the service, dating back at least to the commencement of the seventh

<sup>1</sup> Neale and Littledale’s *Translation of Liturgies*, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

century, and probably much earlier ; but that until the ninth century or later the prayer was omitted on Sundays. The ' Memento for the Living ' was to some extent similarly affected, for the recital of the names was omitted on Sundays, though the prayer itself was said ; but with regard to the departed both names and prayer were dropped on those days. Still there is ample evidence to establish the recognition of the custom on week-days in early times, the names not being read from diptychs after the Eastern custom (adopted also in the Gallican Church), but being silently recited by the celebrant.<sup>1</sup>

This commemoration, which is precisely the same also in the Ambrosian Missal, is as follows :—

" Memento etiam, Domine, famulorum famularumque tuarum N. et N., qui nos præcesserunt cum signo fidei et dormiunt in somno pacis. Ipsis, Domine, et omnibus in Christo quiescentibus locum refrigerii, lucis et pacis, ut indulgeas deprecamur. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum." <sup>2</sup>

" Remember also, O Lord, thy servants N. and N., who have gone before us with the sign of faith, and now do sleep in the sleep of peace. To them, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ grant, we pray thee, a place of refreshment, light, and peace ; through the same Christ our Lord."

<sup>1</sup> Atchley, *Ordo Romanus Primus*, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> C. E. Hammond, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, p. 338.

The preceding is the form that appears both in the Gregorian Canon and in the present *Missale Romanum*<sup>1</sup>; but the earlier Gelasian Canon had, in addition to this form (almost verbatim the same) after the Consecration, also a similar prayer inserted before the Consecration, couched in these terms :—

“Memento etiam, Domine, et animarum famulorum famularumque tuarum fidelium Catholicorum in Christo quiescentium, qui nos præcesserunt, illorum et illarum, qui per eleemosynam et confessionem tibi reddunt vota sua æterno Deo vivo et vero.”<sup>2</sup>

“Remember also, O Lord, the souls of thy servants, the faithful Catholics, who have gone before us and now do rest in Christ—even those who by their alms and Christian profession are paying their vows to thee, the eternal, living, and true God.”

The *Gelasian Sacramentary* furthermore made provision for as many as fourteen Masses for the Dead to be used on various occasions, besides divers other prayers for the departed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Monumenta Ecclesiæ Liturgica*, Cabrol and Leclercq, p. lxxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> Brightman, pp. 367, 371.

<sup>3</sup> *The Gelasian Sacramentary*, H. A. Wilson, pp. 301, 295.

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The following is the form used in the Gallican Church :—

“ Simulque precantes oramus etiam, Domine, pro animabus famulorum tuorum, Patrum atque institutorum quondam nostrorum, . . . vel omnium fratrum nostrorum, quos de hoc loco ad te vocare dignatus es. Cunctorumque etiam hujus loci memores Fidelium, pariterque parentum nostrorum atque servientium hujus loci : et pro animabus omnium Fidelium famulorum tuorum, vel famularum, ac peregrinorum in pace ecclesiæ defunctorum : ut eis tu, Domine Deus noster, peccatorum tribuas veniam et requiem largiaris æternam : meritis et intercessionibus sanctorum tuorum . . . hæc propitius præstare et exaudire digneris.”<sup>1</sup>

“ At the same time also we offer our prayers to thee, O Lord, for the souls of thy servants our fathers and teachers of past times . . . and of all our brethren, whom thou hast been pleased to call to thyself from this place. We are mindful too of all the faithful of this place, and also of our parents and of those who have served in this place. And for the souls of all the faithful, thy servants, and for the strangers who have died in the faith of the Church we pray ; that thou, O Lord our God, wouldst forgive their sins and grant them eternal

<sup>1</sup> Brightman, p. 317.

rest. By the merits and intercessions of thy saints be pleased graciously to hear our prayer."

In the *Mozarabic Rite* early in the service the priest prays, "Item pro spiritibus pausantium, Hilarii, Athanasii," &c., and the choir respond, "Et omnium pausantium."<sup>1</sup> Then in the prayer (the embolismus) that forms the expansion of the last petition of the Lord's Prayer occurs the brief intercession, "Præbe redemptionem captivis, sanitatem infirmis, requiem defunctis."<sup>2</sup> "Also for the souls of those at rest—Hilary, Athanasius," &c. "And of all those who are at rest." "Vouchsafe deliverance to the captives, recovery to the sick, rest to the dead." And just before his communion the priest is directed to say the "Memento pro Mortuis."<sup>3</sup>

The earliest Irish missal extant, known as the *Stowe Missal* (ninth or tenth century), contains the following form of commemoration:—"Memento etiam, Domine, et eorum nomina qui nos præceserunt cum signo fidei, et dormiunt in somno pacis." "Remember also, O Lord, the names of those who have gone before us with the sign of faith, and now do sleep in the sleep of peace"; and the book closes with a "Missa pro mortuis pluribus."<sup>4</sup> We know however that at a much earlier date it was

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, p. 317.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

<sup>4</sup> F. E. Warren, *Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*.

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customary to offer intercessions for the departed in the Church's services in Ireland. Here is the testimony of a learned article on the *Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, published in *The Church Quarterly Review* in 1880 (p. 59) :— " In the fifth century it was customary in Ireland to offer the Eucharist on behalf of the departed. In one of the Canons of the Synod of St. Patrick the question is asked how the sacrifice could be expected to benefit a person after death, who had not received it during his lifetime (cap. xii). In the sixth century the monks at Iona were enjoined ' fervour in singing the office of the dead, as if every one of the faithful departed was a particular friend,'<sup>1</sup> and the Eucharist was offered on the day of the funeral, and on the third and seventh days afterwards.<sup>2</sup> In the seventh century when St. Gall was informed of the death of Columbanus, he forthwith gave orders for preparations to be made to enable him to offer the sacrifice of salvation for the repose of the departed saint,<sup>3</sup> and a like kind office was performed on behalf of St. Gall by a surviving episcopal friend.<sup>4</sup> Prayer for the repose of the dead being thus a general custom, and the

<sup>1</sup> Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils, &c.*, ii. i. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Fleming, *Collect. Sacra*, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> Walafrid Strabo, *Vita B. Galli*, i. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 30.

commemoration of the departed being one aspect and object of the Eucharist, it naturally occupied a recognised position in the Liturgy. Diptychs containing the names of the deceased were brought by the deacon to the celebrant, and their contents were announced by him during the offertory, after the first oblation of the unconsecrated elements, and before the Canon. A special penance was assigned at Iona to the deacon who forgot this part of his duty.<sup>1</sup> This recitation of names was followed by an anthem in an authorized form of words, called the *Deprecatio*. It contained an enumeration of the names of those departed saints for whose repose the prayers of the congregation were requested, and of those by whose intercessions such would be assisted."

Besides all these examples from the liturgies there is evidence that might be cited from the daily offices and the services for the burial of the dead. But the passages quoted above are sufficient, and indeed they contain the more valuable testimony; for they prove conclusively that even in normal circumstances, when there was no special reason to lead men to think of those who had been removed hence, in the highest act of Christian worship our Christian forefathers of every age and

<sup>1</sup> Cuminius, *De Mensura Pœnitent.*, cap. xiii.

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in every land never failed to recognise that those at rest were still members of the Church, and in the most solemn moments of the service of the altar were wont to supplicate the Almighty that he would grant to the departed pardon, peace, and rest.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE EVIDENCE OF EARLY CHRISTIAN TOMBS (FOREIGN).

THE first centuries of the Christian era were not a period in which it was the custom to indulge in lengthy or elaborately worded epitaphs. Concise and to the point, their function was merely to indicate the identity of the person sleeping below, and perhaps the date of death, with, not infrequently, the addition of a few words expressive of the affectionate interest cherished by the survivors in the departed one. It would therefore be vain to expect from the tombstones of that age any full revelation of points of Christian doctrine, or any lengthy prayers for the departed. Doctrine and prayers are indeed represented there, and very illuminating they are ; but all are characterized by brevity, very often by meagreness, and we must be careful to bear in mind the necessary limitations, and to allow full weight to such evidence as they present.

To what we have said about brevity however one exception must be made. The case is that of Avircius, or Abercius, Bishop of Hieropolis in Lesser Phrygia, who died certainly not later than 192, and probably about 161 A.D. His epitaph is indeed of considerable length, consisting of twenty-two hexameter lines, in which the deceased is represented as giving a sketch of his Christian career ; after which he continues :—"These words, I, Avircius, standing by, ordered to be inscribed. I was of a truth in my seventy-second year. Let every friend who observeth this, pray for me." The Greek is this :—*Ταῦθ' ὁ νοῶν ἐξῆαιτο ὑπὲρ μου πᾶς ὁ συνφδός.*<sup>1</sup>

From the inscriptions in the Roman Catacombs a wealth of evidence may be drawn. Dr. Luckock in 1879 stated that about 6000 were then known, considerably more than half of which were assignable to the ante-Nicene period.<sup>2</sup> Here are a few selected by Dr. Rock for his *Hierurgia* (vol. ii, pp. 82-85) :—"Val Sabina vixit ann viii mesib viii dies xxii vivas in Deo dulcis." "Farewell, O Sabina ! She lived eight years, eight months, twenty-two days. Mayest thou live sweetly in God";<sup>3</sup> "Lea bene

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers*, pt. ii, vol. i, p. 493 ; Article by W. M. Ramsay in *Spectator*, vol. ix, 1889, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> *After Death*, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> From the Cemetery of Callixtus ; see Buonarruoti, p. 166.

cesquas." "O Lea! mayest thou rest in peace."<sup>1</sup>  
 "Domina dulcissima Stercoria filia qui bixit an. ii. mens. iiii. in pace Domini dormias." "The sweetest lady, our daughter Stercoria, who lived two years and four months. Mayest thou sleep in the peace of the Lord."<sup>2</sup> "Olimpiodore vivas in Deo." "Olimpiodorus, mayest thou live in God."<sup>3</sup> "Ulpia viva sis cum fratribus tuis." "Ulpia, mayest thou live with thy brothers."<sup>4</sup> The following are quoted in J. S. Northcote's *Visit to the Catacombs* (pp. 118-120):—"Φιγουμένη ἐν εἰρήνῃ σου τὸ πνεῦμα." "Beloved one, may thy spirit be in peace." "Regina vivas in Domino Zesu." "Regina, mayest thou live in the Lord Jesus." "Lucifere . . . meruit titulum inscribi ut quisqui de fratribus roget Deu ut sancto et innocenti spirito ad Deum suscitatur." "Lucifera . . . deserved that an epitaph should be inscribed to her, that whosoever of the brethren should read it, he may pray God that her holy and innocent spirit may be received to God." "Δήμητρης et Λεοντία Cειρικὴ φείλιε benemerenti μνησθῆς Ἰησοῦς ὁ Κύριος τέκνον ε . . ." "Demetrius and Leontia to their well-deserving daughter Syrica. Remember, O Lord Jesus, our child!" Here are two from

<sup>1</sup> From the Cemetery of Calepodius: see Boldetti, p. 432.

<sup>2</sup> Boldetti, p. 418,

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; p. 340.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 419.

the *Handbook to Christian and Ecclesiastical Rome* (pp. 416, 418) :—"Antonia anima dulcis in pace . . . Deus refrigeret." "Antonia, sweet soul in peace . . . may God refresh. . . ." "Ἐκοίμηθε ἐν εἰρήνῃ μνησθῇ αὐτοῦ ὁ Θεὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας." "He sleeps in peace. May God remember him for ever." These are preserved in H. M. Luckock's *After Death* (pp. 94, 95) :—"Kalemero Deus refrigeret spiritum tuum una cum sororis tuæ Hilare." "Kalemeros, may God refresh thy spirit together with that of thy sister Hilara."<sup>1</sup> "Domine ne quando adumbretur spiritus Veneres de filius ipseius qui superstitis sunt Benirosus Projectus." "O Lord, let not the spirit of Venus be overshadowed. Of her sons who survive are Benirosus and Projectus" (from the Cemetery of St. Callixtus). The Reverend J. W. Burgon in his *Letters from Rome* (p. 221) supplies this :—"O Hermogenes, farewell! Thou didst live, faring pleasantly, causing grief to no one. He is laid here on the 15th of the Kalends of January. Remember him, O God, among thy lambs!" And finally in *The Catacombs of Rome* the Reverend W. H. Withrow (who makes no attempt to conceal his strong Protestant bias)

<sup>1</sup> From the Catacomb of St. Ermetes : see Burgon's *Letters from Rome*, p. 220.

admits the following as authentic :—" Remember, O Lord Jesus, our child " ; " May the Almighty God Christ refresh thy spirit in Christ " ; " Remember, O God, the sleep of thy servant ! give rest to the soul of thy servant in the light, in the refreshment in Abraham's bosom " ; " May God remember him for ever " (pp. 442, 443).

Evidence of this nature, dating as it does from A.D. 71 or earlier down to the capture of Rome by the Goths in 410, is deserving of much consideration, for it gives us an insight into the devotions of the Christians in the capital city of the Empire in the primitive ages of the faith ; and although we have to admit that many pious utterances on these tombstones may be regarded as mere aspirations, yet some of those quoted above are real intercessory prayers addressed to the Deity, asking for his favour to be bestowed on the deceased. And with regard to the more numerous class of inscriptions, where the wish expressed is logically addressed not to God but to the person commemorated, there is there contained the real spirit of prayer, and no mere rhetorical apostrophe, such as occurs in each verse of the *Benedicite*. No one can with unbiassed mind study these epitaphs from the Catacombs without feeling that there is a very genuine distinction to be drawn between them and even such a formula as

“ O Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever ” ; for that is couched in the form only of an invitation, and few would regard even the invitation as being personal ; while the others, though in some cases, strictly speaking, addressed to the departed, are in essence and intention prayer for the departed directed to God.

In addition to these we may quote other instances from Egypt, though these belong to a somewhat later age, viz., the seventh or eighth century. They are Christian gravestones from Old Dongola (midway between Assouan and Khartum) in Nubia, and bear Greek inscriptions, of which the following are examples. (1) “ O God of the spirits and of all flesh, who didst abolish death and gavest life to the world, give rest to (ἀνάπαυσον) this soul, even thy servant Maritanus, Archimandrite . . . and with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the place of light may he dwell.” (2) “. . . God of the spirits and of all flesh, give rest to his soul in the bosoms of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob ; in the chambers of God the Father may he rest.” This is a common form in Egypt, and twenty-one such inscriptions are collected by Böckh, ‘ C.I.G.’ 9113-9133.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Article by F. C. Burkitt in *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1903, vol. iv, pp. 585-587.

Here then we have cited sepulchral prayers for the dead from three of the chief centres of civilization in the early ages of Christianity—Rome, Western Asia Minor, and Egypt—which are sufficient to establish the contention that to pray for departed friends was recognised by the early Church as a right and laudable custom.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### EARLY BRITISH AND ENGLISH EVIDENCE.

ALTHOUGH the Church in these islands was in early times much cut off from communication with the outside world, so that it was characterized by its own rites and ceremonies and religious customs, which in some cases were peculiar to itself ; yet its isolation did not lead it into any serious divergence from Catholic faith or practice. Augustine's difficulties with the British bishops seem to have been concerned only with externals or non-essentials, and the Pelagian heresy was successfully refuted before it had time to do much harm ; so that in all important points of doctrine or observance Christians here were at one with Christians on the Continent. Every shred of evidence—and there are many—tends to prove that this was so in the matter of prayers for the departed.

Perhaps the earliest testimony to this effect is that of the inscribed Celtic and Anglo-Saxon stone



monuments, a number of which have happily survived in various parts of these islands.

Of these the oldest in England, described by Bishop Browne as "this earliest piece of English literature, this earliest English sepulchral inscription,"<sup>1</sup> is a cross in the churchyard at Bewcastle in Cumberland, which "contains a request for prayer for the sins of Alchfrith's soul, and Alchfrith was dead." It was set up in 670, and bears this inscription:—"This thin token of victory Hwætred Wothgar Olwfwolthu set up after [in memory of] Alchfrith once king and son of Oswy. Pray for the high sin of his soul."<sup>2</sup> There is another at Thornhill near Dewsbury, bearing the legend:—"Gilsuith raised in memory of Berhtsuith a token at the grave mound. Pray for the soul."<sup>3</sup> Lancaster supplies another example, where a runic Anglo-Saxon cross prefers the petition:—"Pray ye for Cynibald Cuthburuc."<sup>4</sup> And Bishop Browne quotes two others, one at Falstone in Northumberland:—"Pray for the soul"; and the other at Upton in Wirrall:—"The people set up the memorial. Pray for Ethelmund."<sup>5</sup> At Hackness near Whitby is still further evidence

<sup>1</sup> *Conversion of the Heptarchy*, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> *History of Lancaster*, by J. Harland, vol. ii, p. 553; and *Archæological Journal*, vol. iii, p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> *Conversion of the Heptarchy*, p. 205.

on an inscribed cross erected in memory of Abbess Oedilburga, a contemporary of St. Boniface, part of which is this:—"Blessed Oedilburga, may they that love ever bear thee in mind, dutifully beg for thee the verdant everlasting repose of the saints, O pious mother apostolic" ; while another fragment of the inscription asks prayers for her:—"Trecea ora . . . abbatissa Oedilburga orate pro. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

A stone at Caldey Priory in Pembrokeshire, assigned to the early part of the fifth century, contains a request that passers-by would pray for the soul of one Catuoconus:—

"Et signo crucis in illam fingsi ; rogo omnibus ammulantibus ibi [ut] exorent pro anima Catuoconi." <sup>2</sup>

"And I have marked the sign of the cross on it. I beg all who pass by the place to pray for the soul of Catuoconus."

Another, a low cross, standing in the churchyard of Gwnnws near Aberystwith in Cardiganshire, makes a similar request for one Hiroidil:—

"Quicunque explicaverit hoc nomen det benedictionem pro anima hiroidil filius carotinn." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Theodore and Wilfrith*, Bp. Browne, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> *Liturgy of the Celtic Church*, F. E. Warren, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, and G. E. Evans's *Cardiganshire*, p. 57.

“Let every one who reads this name offer blessing for the soul of Hiroidil, the son of Carotinn.”

Others are mentioned by Mr. Warren as existing in Scotland at Iona and in Ireland at Lismore and at Inismurray, the legend on the last running thus :—

“Ordo Moredach hu chomochain hic dormit.”

We pass on to references in early written documents, and here the first examples belong rather to Celtic works in other parts of these islands than to England itself. The Book of Durrow or Gospel of St. Columba, an Irish MS. of the sixth century, concludes with a request by the scribe for the prayers of his readers, the request evidently being intended to apply specially to the time when he shall have gone from this world. This is the closing entry :—

“Rogo beatitudinem tuam, sancte presbyter Patrice, ut quicumque hunc libellum manu tenuerit meminerit Columbæ scriptoris, qui hoc scripsi ipsemet evangelium per XII dierum spatium, gratia Domini nostri.”

And lower down is written in a contemporary hand :—“Ora pro me frater mi ; Dominus tecum sit.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jesse's *Purgatory, Pardons, &c.*, p. 23 ; Warren's *Liturgy of the Celtic Church*, p. 103.

"I pray your holiness, blessed priest Patrick, that every one who holds this book in his hand may remember Columba the scribe, for by the grace of our Lord I wrote the gospel with my own hand in twelve days." "Pray for me, brother. The Lord be with thee."

Such entries were apparently quite in vogue in those ages, and at the end of the copy of St. John's Gospel (early seventh century), which immediately precedes the Irish Stowe Missal, there appears this note :—

"Rogo quicumque hunc librum legeris ut memineris mei peccatoris scriptoris." <sup>1</sup>

"I ask everyone who reads this book to remember me the scribe, sinner that I am."

Similar is the close of Adamnan's *De Locis Sanctis* of the seventh century :—

"Horum ergo lectorem admone experimentorum, ut pro me misello peccatore, eorundem craxatore, Christum judicem sæculorum exorare non neglegat." <sup>2</sup>

"Therefore exhort the reader of these my efforts not to omit to pray to Christ, the judge of the world, on behalf of me, a miserable sinner, who wrote this book."

And the same is expressed by the scribe at the conclusion of the *Life of St. Columba* by the same author :—

<sup>1</sup> Warren, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

“*Quicumque hos virtutum libellos Columbæ legerit pro me Dorbbeneo Dominum deprecetur, ut vitam post mortem æternam possideam.*”

“Let everyone who reads this narrative of the virtues of Columba pray unto the Lord for me, Dorbbeneus, that after my death I may inherit everlasting life.”

And yet again another instance appears at the end of the Book of Mac Regol about 800 A.D. :—

“*Quicumque legeret et intelligeret istam narrationem orat pro Mac Reguil scriptori.*”<sup>1</sup>

“Let everyone who reads and understands this history pray for Mac Reguil, who wrote it.”

The Stowe Missal mentioned above not only includes in the Canon of the Mass a commemoration of the faithful departed, but also provides a “*Missa pro mortuis*,”<sup>2</sup> in which occurs this beautiful petition :—

“*Ut Deus omnipotens, Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi, jubeat carnem animamque et spiritum eorum suscipi in locum lucis in partem refrigerii in sinibus Abrache et Isac et Jacob, dimittat quoque et quicquid incongrue per ignorantiam atque subripiente inimico peccaverunt, et spiritu oris sui eos refrigerare dignaretur.*”<sup>3</sup>

“That God almighty, the Father of our Lord

<sup>1</sup> Warren, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> P, 66 of the MS.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; p. 68.

Jesus Christ, would give charge that their bodies, souls, and spirits be carried into the land of light and place of refreshment in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that he would forgive whatever wrong they have committed either unwittingly or through the wiles of the enemy, and would refresh them with the breath of his mouth."

But it is time to turn from Ireland, with its rule laid on the Culdees (eighth century) to offer intercessions in the shape of litanies on behalf of the dead as well as the living; and from Scotland, where the Regula of St. Columba enjoined the monks at Iona to display "fervour in singing the office for the dead, as if every dead person was a particular friend of theirs<sup>1</sup>" (as has been already mentioned); and to marshal the early documentary evidence that England can produce to show that prayers for the departed were commonly offered here also.

The *Penitential of Theodore*<sup>2</sup> contains regulations with regard to the singing of masses for the dead, which afford us an instructive insight into the practice of the Church of England twelve hundred years ago. They show that it was customary at all funerals to have a mass for the departed, celebrated in the church before the

<sup>1</sup> Warren, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury, 668-690.

interment, and prayers offered by the graveside. For the regular clergy four other masses at least were to be said at later dates, three for secular clergy, one for a monk, and one for a layman. The rules as set forth in the *Penitential*<sup>1</sup> are these :—

“ 1. Secundum Romanam ecclesiam mos est monachos vel homines religiosos defunctos æcclesiam (sic) portare, et cum crisma unguere pectora eorum, ibique pro eis missas celebrare ; deinde cum cantatione portare ad sepulturas ; et cum positi fuerint in sepulcro, funditur pro eis oratio, deinde humo vel petra operiuntur.

“ 2. Prima et tertia et nona nec non et tricesima die pro eis missa agatur, et exinde post annum si voluerint servatur.

“ 3. Pro defuncto monacho missa agatur die sepulturæ ejus et III. die, postea quantas voluerit abbas.

“ 4. Missæ quoque monachorum fieri per singulas septimanas et nomina recitare mos est.

“ 5. Missæ vero secularium mortuorum III. in anno, tertia die et nona die et XXX., quia resurrexit Dominus tertia die et nona hora spiritum emisit, et XXX. dies Moysen planxerunt filii Israhel.

“ 6. Pro laico bono tertia die missa fuit ; pro penitente XXXma die, vel septima post jejunium, quia et propinquos ejus oportet jejunare VII. dies et oblationem offerre ad altare, sicut in Jesu

<sup>1</sup> Book ii., chap. 5.

filio Sirach legitur et pro Saul filii Israhel jejuna-  
verunt ; postea quantas voluerit presbiter.

“7. Multi dicunt non licere pro infantibus missas  
facere ante VII. annum, sed tamen licet.

“8. Dionisius (sic) Ariopagita dicit blasphemias  
Deo facere qui missas offert pro malo homine.

“9. Agustinus (sic) dicit pro omnibus Christianis  
esse faciendam quia vel eis proficit aut offerentibus  
aut petentibus consulatur (sic).

“10. Non esse licitum missas celebrare presbitero  
vel diacono cui non licet vel non vult communionem  
accipere.”<sup>1</sup>

“1. According to the Roman Church it is  
customary to carry the bodies of monks or clergy  
into the church, and to anoint their breasts with  
holy oil, and there to say masses for them. They  
are then carried out to burial to the accompaniment  
of singing, and when they have been laid in the  
grave, prayer is offered for them, and then they  
are covered with earth or a stone.

“2. On the next day and the third and the ninth,  
and also on the thirtieth, mass is said for them, and  
further the anniversary is kept, if desired.

“3. For a monk mass is said on the day of burial  
and on the third day, and afterwards as often as  
the abbot shall determine.

“4. Masses are also said for monks on each day  
of the week, and their names are commemorated.

<sup>1</sup> *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, Haddan and Stubbs,  
vol. iii, p. 194 ; Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, xcix, p. 929.



"5. For secular clergy three masses are said, on the third day and the ninth and the thirtieth—for it was on the third day that our Lord rose again, it was the ninth hour when he gave up the ghost, and the children of Israel mourned for Moses thirty days.

"6. For a layman of good character mass is said on the third day; for a penitent on the thirtieth day, or on the seventh—if preceded by a fast; for his friends ought to fast seven days and offer at the altar, as we read in the book of Jesus the son of Sirach, and as the children of Israel fasted for Saul. Afterwards are said as many more as the priest shall determine.

"7. Many authorities say that masses ought not to be said for children under seven years of age, but such are allowable.

"8. According to Dionysius the Areopagite it is sacrilegious to say mass for an evil-doer.

"9. According to Augustine mass is to be said for all Christian people, for it confers a benefit on them, or at least affords consolation to those who offer or join in the prayers.

"10. Mass may not be said for priests or deacons who are excommunicate, or who refused to communicate."

Similar rules appear in the *Regularis Concordia S. Dunstani Archiep. Cant.*, though St. Dunstan substitutes a mass on the seventh day after death for that on the ninth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rock's *Church of our Fathers*, vol. ii, p. 316.

The Council of Cloveshoo in 747 reckoned the offices for the dead as a normal part of the duty of "ecclesiastici sive monasteriales," Canon 30 concluding thus :—" Ut pro viventibus divina precaretur clementia, et pro mortuis piæ placationis celebratio sæpius pro illarum requie animarum, per plurimorum officia sacerdotum Christi ageretur." <sup>1</sup> " On behalf of the living prayer should be offered for the Lord's compassion, and on behalf of the dead the propitiatory sacrifice should be frequently celebrated for the repose of their souls by the ministry of a great number of Christ's priests."

And early in the next century (816) the Council of Calcuith drew up regulations for religious observances in connexion with the burial of a bishop, Canon 10 ordaining that when a bishop dies,

"Statim per singulas parochias in singulis quibusque ecclesiis, pulsato signo, omnes pariter XXX psalmos pro defuncti anima decantent. Et postea unusquisque antistes et abbas DC psalmos et CXX missas celebrare faciat." <sup>2</sup>

"Immediately in each church in every parish at the ringing of the bell thirty psalms are to be sung by everyone for the soul of the

<sup>1</sup> Wilkins's *Concilia*, vol. i, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

departed. And afterwards each chief minister and abbot is to have 600 psalms said and 120 masses offered."

In Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (book iv, chap. 22) there is a tale of how one Imma, a soldier, was taken captive in war, and how his brother Tunna, who was a priest and abbot, thinking him to be dead, offered masses for him ("pro absolutione animæ ejus sepius missas facere curavit"). The miraculous element, so common in Bede, is very pronounced in the story; but whether the details are credible or not, the simple and inartificial manner in which the reference is introduced, shows clearly enough that at the period when Bede wrote his history (731 A.D.) it was regarded as usual and proper for masses to be offered for the souls of the departed—so much so that the incident related is said to have resulted in stirring up fresh zeal for so pious a custom :—

"Multi hæc audientes, accensi sunt in fide ac devotione pietatis ad orandum, vel ad eleemosynas faciendas, vel ad offerendas Domino victimas sacræ oblationis, pro ereptione suorum, qui de sæculo migraverant; intellexerunt enim, quia sacrificium salutare ad redemptionem valeret et animæ et corporis sempiternam."

"On hearing this many in their faith and

devotion were stirred up to pray, or to give alms, or to offer to the Lord the holy sacrifice for the deliverance of their friends, who had departed from this life. For they felt that the saving sacrifice would avail for the eternal redemption of both soul and body."

The same inference is made doubly sure by what Bede recounts concerning the death of St. Hilda ; of how a nun named Begu in the convent of Hackness, thirteen miles distant from Whitby, learnt in the night from a vision that Hilda had died ; and at once Frigyd, the acting-abbess, "*suscitavit cunctas sorores, et in ecclesiam convocatas orationibus ac psalmis pro anima matris operam dare monuit. Quod cum residuo noctis tempore diligenter agerent, venerunt primo diluculo fratres, qui ejus obitum nuntiarent, a loco, ubi defuncta est.*" "She aroused all the nuns, and summoning them to the church, bade them diligently say prayers and psalms for the soul of their mother. So they spent the rest of the night in this way, and at early dawn there arrived some brothers from the place where she had died, who brought tidings of her decease."

A similar incident is said to have happened at the same time in a remote part of Hilda's own convent, whereupon the sister informed her fellows,

“easque ad orandum pro anima ejus excitaverit.”<sup>1</sup>

“She moved them to pray for her soul.”

Doubtless Drythelm’s vision of the other world merely reflected the common beliefs and practices that were current in those days; and in his narration of his experiences he tells how his angelic guide explained the wonders that he had beheld in the intermediate state, the explanation containing this statement :—

“Multos autem preces viventium, et elimosynæ, et jejunia, et maxime celebratio missarum, ut etiam ante diem judicii liberentur, adjuvant.”<sup>2</sup>

“But before the day of judgment the deliverance of many is promoted by the prayers of the living, and their alms and fastings, and especially by the offering of masses.”

Here is another testimony to the value set upon prayers offered for the departed. Elfled, Abbess of Whitby, begged her father King Oswy to grant a site for a monastery at Gilling, where prayers might be offered up for the slain King Oswin, and also for Oswy who had had him murdered.<sup>3</sup>

Bede’s own opinion as to the efficacy of masses for the dead is to be found in his 49th *Homily*,

<sup>1</sup> Bede, *Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. 24.

where his plain statement that they avail for the delivering of souls from purgatory shows that offering with such intent must have been nothing unusual in his time :—

“ At vero nonnulli propter bona quidem opera ad electorum sortem præordinati, sed propter mala aliqua quibus polluti de corpore exierunt, post mortem severe castigandi excipiuntur flammis ignis purgatorii, et vel usque ad diem judicii longa hujus examinatione a vitiorum sorde mundantur ; vel certe prius amicorum fidelium precibus, eleemosynis, jejuniis, fletibus, hostiæ salutaris oblationibus absoluti pœnis, et ipsi ad beatorum perveniunt requiem.”<sup>1</sup>

“ There are some, destined because of their good deeds to share the inheritance of the elect, who nevertheless, on account of some sins by which they were stained at the time of their death, are condemned to be afterwards punished in the fires of purgatory. The process of cleansing these from the taint of their sins is extended by a lengthy torture even to the day of judgment ; or else indeed they attain to the repose of the blessed by being sooner set free from their punishment by the prayers of their pious friends, and their alms and fastings and tears, and by the offering of the saving sacrifice.”

And how he valued such intercession is manifest

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Giles's edition, vol. v, p. 380.

from his own request to Bishop Eadfrid and the brethren of Lindisfarne, to whom he dedicated his *Life of St. Cuthbert*; for he begs their prayers for himself not only while he is in the land of the living,

“Sed, et me defuncto, pro redemptione animæ meæ, quasi familiaris et vernaculi vestri, orare, et missas facere, et nomen meum inter vestra scribere dignemini. Nam et tu, sanctissime antistes, hoc te mihi promisisse jam retines, in cujus etiam testimonium futuræ conscriptionis religioso fratri vestro Guthfrido mansionario præcepisti, ut in albo vestræ sanctæ congregationis meum nunc quoque nomen apponeret.”<sup>1</sup>

“But also when I am dead, be pleased to pray for the redemption of my soul—for I am your friend and fellow-countryman—and offer masses for me, and inscribe my name in your list. For doubtless, most reverend father, you remember that you promised me this, and as an assurance that my name should be enrolled, you instructed your seneschal, the good brother Guthfrid, to enter my name at once in the album of your holy congregation.”

On his deathbed Bede preferred the same petition to the members of his own house, as one of his disciples who was there present tells us:—

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the *Life of St. Cuthbert*, Giles's edition, vol. iv, p. 206.

“Præsentibus illis locutus est ad eos et unumquemque, monens et obsecrans pro eo missas diligenter et orationes facere; et illi libenter respondere.”<sup>1</sup>

“While they were there he addressed them, each one individually, begging and charging them to be regular in offering masses and prayers on his behalf. And they readily promised him to do so.”

Requests such as these of Bede were by no means uncommon in those ages. Thus there is a similar petition addressed by Ethelbert II, King of Kent (748–762), to St. Boniface :—

“Totis visceribus mentis efflagito, ut . . . multis nos ac crebris orationum tuarum suffragiis adjuvare digneris . . . tam dum adhuc esse me in hac mortali carne audias, quam etiam post obitum meum.”<sup>2</sup>

“With all my powers I crave that you will be pleased to assist me by frequently offering many prayers; and that, not only as long as you know me to be still in the flesh, but also after my decease.”

And Bugga, Abbess of Minster in Thanet, begs St. Boniface the like for another :—

“Similiter deosco, ut sanctarum missarum

<sup>1</sup> *De Obitu Bædæ*, Plummer's *Bede*, vol. i, p. clxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Giles's edition of *St. Boniface's Works*, vol. i, p. 177; Rock's *Church of our Fathers*, vol. ii, p. 293.



oblationes offerre digneris pro anima mei propinqui, qui mihi præ ceteris charus erat.”<sup>1</sup>

“Likewise I ask you to be pleased to offer many holy masses for the soul of my neighbour, who was dearer to me than any other.”

The same too is recorded of Elfled, Abbess of Whitby, who besought St. Cuthbert (d. 687) on behalf of her dependants :—

“Precor, domine mi episcopo, memineris ad missas Harduualdi mei, qui heri cadendo de arbore defunctus est.”<sup>2</sup>

“I pray you, my lord bishop, remember at mass my Hardwald, who met his death yesterday by falling from a tree.”

Bede's reference above to the monastic “album” is merely one of many instances of a well-recognised custom, for each community would have its own *Liber Vitæ* or *Album Congregationis*, in which would be entered the names of departed members and benefactors, who would be commemorated from time to time in the Canon of the Mass. Thus Alcuin, writing to Ethelbald, Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow, says :—

“Antecessores tui . . . in albo beatitudinis vestre meæ parvitatís nomen conscribi jusserunt.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Giles's edition of *St. Boniface's Works*, vol. i, p. 28,

<sup>2</sup> Bede's *Life of St. Cuthbert*, chap. 34.

<sup>3</sup> C. Plummer's *Bede*, vol. i, p. xxvii.

"Your predecessors gave instructions that my unworthy name should be entered in your reverence's album."

The *Album Ecclesiæ* or *Liber Vitæ* of Durham, belonging to the ninth century, with additional entries down to about 1493, is still preserved, and in it the names of benefactors and others commemorated are entered under various heads, as *Nomina Regum et Ducum, Reginarum et Abbatissarum, Anachoritarum, Abbatum, Presbyterum, Diaconorum, Clericorum, Monachorum*.<sup>1</sup>

This evidence of brotherly feeling was at a quite early date extended to embrace other houses in an association of common intercession, each monastery informing the others whenever a name was to be added to the list. The earliest instance of this known to Haddan and Stubbs belongs to the period 729-744 A.D., and is a letter from Abbot Aldhun (perhaps of Wimborne) and two abbesses to Abbot Coengils of Glastonbury and two others, agreeing to a proposal of mutual intercession. It runs as follows :—

"Libenter namque atque gratanter vestræ salutationis munuscula suscepimus Deoque adjuvante isdem digna reconpensare desideramus ; et eam,

<sup>1</sup> *The Old Service-Books of the English Church*, C. Wordsworth and H. Littlehales, p. 159.

quam circa nos scripsistis habere in orationibus communionem, bono animo et pura fide erga vos indesinenter habere horis, quibus intimastis, consentimus. Nomina quoque nostrarum defunctorum sororum ego Cneuburg memorialiter te habere, O Wiehtberhte presbiter fidelis, deprecor, et omnibus circumquaque amicis transmittere. Quarum prima fuit Quoengyth soror mea germana; et Edlu, quæ erat, cum adhuc viveret, mater Etan, Aldhuni quondam tui abbatis propinquæ. Quarum utique ambarum fuit uno die depositio, id est Idibus Septembris.”<sup>1</sup>

“Gladly and thankfully we have received your gifts and greeting, and we desire by God’s help to make a worthy return for them. And that association in prayers, which you have written to us about, with good will towards you and full confidence we agree to observe without fail at the times that you have mentioned. And I, Cneuburg, beg you, faithful priest Wiehtberhte, to commemorate the names of our deceased sisters, and to pass them on to all friends in the neighbourhood. The first of these are my own sister Quoengyth, and Edlu, who, while in the flesh, was mother of Etan, neighbour of your former Abbot Aldhun. These two died on the same day, viz., September 13th.”

As an instance of compliance with such a request for brotherly remembrance at the altar we may cite

<sup>1</sup> *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents*, vol. iii, p. 342.

a letter addressed about A.D. 760 by Cuthbert, Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow, to Lullus, Archbishop of Mainz, in which he declares that :—

“Nomina fratrum quæ ad nos misisti cum nominibus hujus monasterii fratrum dormientium in Christo scripta continentur, ita ut pro illis nonaginta et eo amplius missas facere præceperim.”<sup>1</sup>

“The brethren’s names that you sent to us have been entered with the names of the brethren of this house who have fallen asleep ; and I have given instructions to say ninety masses or more on their behalf.”

The rites for the burial of a monk, as revised for English monasteries by Archbishop Dunstan (d. 988), are interesting in themselves, and are instructive as showing what care was authoritatively taken to secure for the deceased the benefit of the prayers of the Church :—

“Exempto homine, lavetur corpus a quibus jussum fuerit : lotum induatur mundis vestimentis, id est interrula, cuculla, caligis, calceis, cujuscumque sit ordinis, nisi vero sacerdos fuerit circumdetur ei stola super cucullam si ita ratio dictaverit ; inde defertur in ecclesiam, psallentibus cunctis, motisque omnibus signis ; quod si ante lucem, nocte, aut finitis tenebris in matutino obierit si sepulturæ impendenda præparari possunt ante refectionem

<sup>1</sup> *Bonifacii Opera*, ed. Giles, vol. i, p. 241.

fratrum, sepeliatur peractis missarum celebrationibus ; sin minus, ordinentur fratres qui sine intermissione psalmodiæ vacent, residentes circa corpus die noctuque sequenti, donec mane facto, corpus terræ commendetur. Consummatis omnibus quæ sepulturæ officio debentur ibidem incipientes septem pœnitentiæ psalmos, revertantur ad ecclesiam, et prostrati coram sancto altari finiant eosdem psalmos pro fratre defuncto : dehinc per septem continuos dies plenarie agatur vigilia, offerentibus cunctis ad matutinalem missam, et omnibus horis regularibus finitis, unum ex præscriptis prostrati canant psalmum, sequente oratione. Exinde usque trigesimum diem, more solito, cum tribus lectionibus agatur vigilia offerente uno choro ad missam. Trigesimo vero die iterum plenarie, his tam XXX diebus, quotidie sacerdotum unusquisque secretis oratorii locis specialiter pro eo missas celebret : diaconi vero psalterium ex integro ; subdiaconi quoque quinquagenarium devotissime psallant, si autem occupati una die nequiverint, alia persolvant. Mittatur etiam epistola ad vicina quæque monasteria ejusdem depositionis denunciatura diem.”<sup>1</sup>

“ When a man has died, let his body be washed by those who are charged with that duty. After that let him be clad in clean garments—shirt, cowl, stockings, and shoes, of whatever order he may be ; but if he is a priest, a stole is to be put on over his

<sup>1</sup> *Regularis Concordia*, p. 93 ; *Rock's Church of our Fathers*, vol. ii, p. 305.

cowl, if thought fitting. Then he is to be carried into the church, everyone meanwhile singing psalms, and all the bells being rung. If the death takes place either in the night or just after day-break, and if the preparations for the burial can be completed before the brethren's breakfast, the interment is to take place immediately after the masses have been celebrated; otherwise some of the brethren are to take their places around the body, and devote themselves to the continuous repetition of psalms throughout the day and the following night, and then after day-break the body is to be committed to the earth. And when all the due rites of burial have been performed, they are at once to begin the seven penitential psalms and return to the church, where, kneeling before the high altar, they are to finish the psalms as a devotion for their deceased brother. After that a vigil is to be kept for the next seven days, all the brethren making their offering at the early mass; and after all the daily services they are to sing one of the appointed psalms with collect following. Then until the thirtieth day, according to custom, a vigil is to be kept with three lessons, one choir making the offering at mass. And on every one of the thirty days each priest is to say a private mass specially on his behalf, and each deacon is to sing devoutly a whole psalter, and each sub-deacon fifty psalms; and if they are too busy to do this on any one day, they are to fulfil the duty on another. Further-

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more let a letter be sent to all the neighbouring monasteries to announce the day of his burial."

Finally mention must be made of so important a document as the Leofric Missal, which was used in Exeter Cathedral during the episcopate of Leofric, its first bishop (1050-1072). Such a service-book supplies a typical example of the prevalence of the practice of praying for the departed at the period of the Norman Conquest. The main part of the volume is occupied by an early tenth century Sacramentary, containing 318 masses and various occasional offices. Of course in every mass the usual commemoration of the dead would be repeated in the Canon, praying for all who rest in Christ "locum refrigerii, lucis, et pacis";<sup>1</sup> but further there are twelve special masses for the dead, one for the living and the dead, and three that are suitable for either class. There is also ample provision for other intercessions:—twelve collects to be used in the presence of the dead as soon as death has taken place, two more together with other devotions when the body is carried into the church before the celebration of the mass for the dead, three other collects after the mass before the procession leaves the church, and thirteen others to be said at the grave. And when it is borne in mind that one of the masses

<sup>1</sup> Warren's *Leofric Missal*, p. 61.

is intended to be offered not only on the day of the funeral, but also on the third, seventh, and thirtieth days after, and on the anniversary of the death, it will be felt that due care was taken to emphasize the belief that the departed are still members of the Church, and the desire that they should enjoy the benefit of the prayers of that part of the Church which is still militant here on earth.

We have thus passed in survey such testimony as can be adduced from the early ages of Christianity in these islands—testimony from inscribed monuments, from liturgies and services, from religious rites and customs, from history and biography and records of Church councils, and in all there is one common agreement, that as far back as any evidence is available, praying for the departed was a general and commonly-accepted practice ; and not only is there nothing discoverable that was opposed to such a practice, but we can find no period or region in which there is sufficient lack of evidence to justify the argument that because prayers for the departed are not mentioned, therefore they were not offered.



## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PRE-REFORMATION PERIOD IN ENGLAND.

It is difficult for us, with our very meagre recognition of the departed in our public worship, to appreciate how prominent a place was assigned to such commemorations in the mediæval mind, how very full was the provision made for the offering of intercessions for them in the services of the Church. That indeed was recognised as an integral and important part of the highest functions of the clergy, for the principal act in the ordination of a priest consisted in the bishop placing in his hands a paten and chalice, and commissioning him thus :—

“ Accipe potestatem offerre sacrificium Deo, misamque celebrare tam pro vivis quam pro defunctis, in nomine Domini Jesu Christi.”<sup>1</sup>

“ Take thou authority to offer sacrifice to God, and to say mass both for the living and the dead, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

<sup>1</sup> Maskell's *Monumenta Ritualia*, vol. iii, p. 214.

Such a charge was never neglected, for every time that he celebrated mass, whatever the occasion might be, the priest was always bound to pray thus after the offertory :—

“Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas, hanc oblationem, quam ego indignus peccator offero . . . pro salute vivorum et requie omnium fidelium defunctorum.”

“Receive, O Holy Trinity, this sacrifice, which I, an unworthy sinner, offer . . . for the preservation of the living and for the repose of all the faithful departed.”

And in the middle of the Canon occurs this commemoration of the faithful departed :—

“Memento etiam, Domine, animarum famulorum famularumque tuarum N. et N. qui nos præcesserunt cum signo fidei et dormiunt in somno pacis ; ipsis, Domine, et omnibus in Christo quiescentibus locum refrigerii, lucis et pacis, ut indulgeas deprecamur.”<sup>1</sup>

“Remember also, O Lord, the souls of thy servants N. and N., who have gone before us with the sign of faith, and now do sleep in the sleep of peace. We beseech thee, O Lord, to grant to them, and to all that rest in Christ, a place of refreshment, light, and peace.”

And when the mass was a special one for a person departed, whether at the time of the funeral or on

<sup>1</sup> *Sarum Missal*, Dickinson, p. 619.

any other day, the service was coloured throughout by suitable references. The introit was Psalm lxi, with the antiphon "Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis," which was sung again as the gradual; or else Psalm xxiii. 4, "Si ambulam in medio umbræ mortis, non timebo mala: quoniam tu mecum es, Domine." "Rest eternal grant to them, O Lord, and let everlasting light shine upon them." "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, O Lord." Several special collects were used, tenderly praying for mercy and rest and salvation. There was a choice of several appropriate Epistles and Gospels (e.g., 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18, and St. John xi. 21-27), and between them was sung as the tract either "Sicut cervus desiderat ad fontes aquarum: ita desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus"<sup>1</sup>—"Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God"—or the *De profundis*.<sup>2</sup>

The prayer at the offertory was this:—

"Domine Jesu Christe, rex gloriæ, libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum de manu inferni et de profundo lacu: libera eas de ore leonis, ne absorbeat eas tartarus: ne cadant in obscura tene-

Psalm xlii. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxxx, 1-5.

brarum loca ; sed signifer sanctus Michael repræsentet eas in lucem sanctam : quam olim Abraham promisisti et semini ejus."

"O Lord Jesus Christ, thou King of glory, deliver the souls of all the faithful departed from the power of darkness and the bottomless pit. Deliver them from the lion's mouth, and let not hell swallow them up. Let them not fall into dark and gloomy places, but charge thy standard-bearer Saint Michael to bear them into the land of holy light, which thou didst promise of old to Abraham and his seed."

This was followed by the invitation, "Orate, fratres et sorores, pro fidelibus defunctis"—"Brethren and sisters, pray for the faithful departed ;" to which the choir responded with the verse, "Requiem æternam," &c. Other beautiful prayers were offered as the *secreta* and *communio* and *post-communio*, with yet again the peace-giving aspiration, "Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine : et lux perpetua luceat eis." This service would always form part of the Order for the Burial of the Dead, and might be repeated on the third and seventh and thirtieth days after the decease or the interment, and also on the anniversary.

The custom of founding chantries by those who could afford the considerable cost was a very usual method of ensuring the perpetual remembrance of

the departed. A chantry is defined as "an endowment for the maintenance of a priest to say mass at a specified altar on behalf of the departed relatives of the founder ;" and chantries first come into notice in England in the middle of the thirteenth century, when William de Kenny, Bishop of Ely, bequeathed 200 marks for the endowment of two chaplains to celebrate for his soul.<sup>1</sup> The pious custom spread rapidly, and persons of wealth and position delighted in founding chantries in the great cathedrals. At St. Paul's they were exceedingly numerous, their record filling nearly forty pages of Dugdale's *St. Paul's*;<sup>2</sup> while some notion of the great number of these celebrations may be gleaned from the researches of C. Wordsworth, who tells us that at Salisbury Cathedral there were eleven daily, apart from occasional obits and anniversaries ; at Wells there were eleven or twelve ; and at Lincoln more than forty.<sup>3</sup> These chantries were often richly endowed, part of the endowment being devoted to provide for poor people, who were called bedesmen or bedeswomen, and whose duty it was to attend the services and pray for the souls of their benefactors.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Prayer Book Dictionary*, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> *Memorials of St. Paul's Cathedral*, by W. Sinclair, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup> *Notes on Mediæval Services*, 1898, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> F. G. Lee, *Prayers for the Departed*, pp. 100-101.

It is to be remembered that whether the mass was an accompaniment of the funeral or was only a commemoration, it was properly preceded by the *Vespers of the Dead* or *Placebo* on the previous evening, and by *Mattins of the Dead* or *Dirge* in the morning. Indeed it would appear that in actual practice, in such cathedrals as Salisbury, Lincoln, and Exeter, both *Mattins* and *Vespers of the Dead* (*Dirge* and *Placebo*) were said daily, the time-table for week-days in Lent also including *Lauds of the Dead* and the *Commendatio animarum*. And each of these services was distinctly an office for the dead, full of prayer for the repose of his soul, and not, as our present service, an office for the consolation of the mourners. What could be more beautiful and appropriate than some of the actions and prayers contained in the *inhumatio defuncti*? This is the antiphon :—

“In paradisum deducant te angeli, in suum conventum suscipiant te martyres, et perducant te in civitatem sanctam Hierusalem.”

“May the angels bear thee to Paradise, and may the martyrs welcome thee into their company, and escort thee into the holy city of Jerusalem.”

Here is one of the prayers offered for the deceased :—

“Non ei dominantur umbræ mortis, nec tegat

eum chaos et caligo tenebrarum, sed exutus omnium criminum labe in sinu Abrahæ collocatus, locum refrigerii se adeptum esse gaudeat : ut cum dies iudicii advenerit, cum sanctis et electis tuis eum resuscitari jubeas."

"Let not the shadow of death oppress him, nor destruction and thick darkness overwhelm him ; but let him be purged from all stain of sin, and laid in Abraham's bosom, there to rejoice at finding a place of refreshment ; that when the day of judgment comes, thou mayest command him to be raised up together with thy saints and elect ones."

The grave was sprinkled with holy water and censed, and this petition uttered :—

"Respice Domine super hanc fabricam sepulturæ, et descendat in eam Spiritus tuus, ut te jubente sit ei in hoc loco quieta dormitio, et tempore iudicii cum omnibus sanctis sit vera resurrectio."

"Look down, O Lord, on this grave, and let thy Holy Spirit descend on it ; that at thy bidding thy servant may find here a quiet resting-place, and at the day of judgment may have a joyful resurrection with all thy saints."

Before the grave was filled in, the priest was to lay on the deceased's breast an absolution, saying at the same time :—

"Dominus Jesus Christus, qui beato Petro apostolo suo cæterisque discipulis suis licentiam dedit

ligandi atque solvendi, ipse te N. absolvat ab omni vinculo delictorum, et in quantum meæ fragilitati permittitur, precor sis absolutus ante tribunal ejusdem Domini nostri Jesu Christi, habeasque vitam æternam et vivas in sæcula sæculorum."

"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who gave to his apostle St. Peter and to the other disciples the power of binding and loosing, release thee, N., from the chain of all thy sins; and as far as I in my weakness am allowed, I pray that thou mayest be pardoned before the judgment-seat of the same our Lord Jesus Christ, and mayest inherit eternal life, and live for ever and ever."

Earth was to be thrown in the form of a cross on to the body, which was to be censed and sprinkled with holy water, and the soul was commended to God's keeping :—

"Tibi, Domine, commendamus animam famuli tui N., ut defunctus seculo tibi vivat, et quæ per fragilitatem mundanæ conversationis peccata admisit, tu venia misericordissimæ pietatis absterge."

"We commend to thee, O Lord, the soul of thy servant N., that though dead to the world, he may live to thee; and whatever sins he has committed through the frailty of human conduct, do thou of thy great pity forgive and purge away."

And finally the service closed with the aspiration :—



“Anima ejus et animæ omnium fidelium defunctorum per Dei misericordiam requiescant in pace. Amen.”

“May his soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

Without pausing to do more than notice the commemoration of all the departed on All Souls' Day, when all the intercessions of past times were, so to speak, gathered together into one great act of intercession, we must say something about the popular devotions of the pre-Reformation period. These are chiefly to be found in the *Prymers*, which, being intended for private use, were often couched wholly, or at any rate almost wholly, in the vernacular. The contents of the *Prymer* proper—though other matter was often added, especially in the later copies—consisted of the following:—the Hours of the Blessed Virgin, the seven Penitential Psalms, the fifteen Gradual Psalms, the Litany, the Office for the Dead (*Placebo* and *Dirge*), and the Commendations of the Souls. This table of contents will show at a glance what an important place was occupied in the devotions of the laity by prayers for the departed.<sup>2</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> Maskell's *Mon. Rit.*, vol. i, pp. 114-129.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

should also be added that in the *Compline of our Lady* a whole section is devoted to intercession "for all Christian souls" (i.e. the departed).

Lastly, there is this sweetly devotional prayer, taken from William Caxton's *Fifteen Oos*, a supplement to the Sarum *Prymer*, belonging to the close of the fifteenth century (the translation is Plumptre's):—

"Be merciful, O Lord, through thy glorious resurrection to the souls of all the faithful departed; be merciful to those souls who have none to intercede for them, for whom there is no consolation or hope in their torment, save that they were made in thine image. Spare them, O Lord, spare them, and defend thy work in them, and give not the work of the honour of thy Name, we pray thee, to another. Despise not the work of thy hands in them, but put forth thy right hand, and free them from the intolerable pains and anguish of hell, and lead them to the fellowship of the citizens on high, for thy holy Name's sake."

This collect is set forth as one to be said "wythin the chirche or chircheyerd."<sup>1</sup>

It seems impossible for anyone to study these devotions of our forefathers of the pre-Reformation

<sup>1</sup> Plumptre, *The Spirits in Prison*, p. 274; C. Wordsworth and H. Littlehales, *The Old Service-Books of the English Church*, p. 288.

period without being profoundly impressed with the very large share of their prayers that was occupied by the departed, with the directness and freedom which characterized their intercessions for them, and with the beauty and tenderness with which they expressed their affectionate concern for the eternal welfare of their souls. There is no denying that they realized to the full the oneness of the Church militant and the Church at rest ; they knew that their departed friends were not yet made perfect, and they were confident that the scope of prayer is not limited to this earthly life, but is as effectual in the spirit-world as here ; and therefore they recognised it as their bounden duty to pray for those who were deceased, as earnestly, as hopefully, and as often as they were wont to do for those who were left behind ; and as they listened to the beautiful prayers, so full of faith and hope, and watched the significant and appropriate ceremonies, they would not only derive sweet comfort in their bereavement, but would feel that for themselves too death had lost its sting and the grave its victory, because of the assurance held out by their Christian religion.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE REFORMATION PERIOD IN ENGLAND.

HITHERTO we have dwelt upon the beauty and suitability as well as upon the prevalence of the practice of praying for the departed. We must now say something of the abuse of the custom, and of how that abuse was dealt with in England. This brings us to the subject of purgatory and of pardons or indulgences.

With regard to purgatory, though among English Churchmen there is felt a strong objection to the word itself, yet few of our theologians go to the length of denying that there is a purgatory ; and if we speak of it instead as a “purifying process,” whereby the soul in the intermediate state is cleansed and made fit for the beatific vision, the objection is generally recognised to have been ill-founded, and to apply to mistaken views or erroneous practices that have been connected with the doctrine, rather than to purgatory itself. For we may find warrant for purgatory both from the Holy Scriptures and

from reason. The early Fathers were influenced by such teaching as that of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which declares that "without sanctification no man shall see the Lord" (xii. 14), or that of the Revelation, that, "there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie" (xxi. 27); and realizing that until the stains and blemishes contracted here have been somehow effaced, we cannot hope to stand before him who is "dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen, nor can see,"<sup>1</sup> and who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil,"<sup>2</sup> they soon gave evidence in their writings that they believed in a purgatory. And knowing the Pauline teaching that "he which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ,"<sup>3</sup> they held that by some gradual purgatorial process men will "go from strength to strength," until "every one of them appeareth before God in Zion."<sup>4</sup>

Suggestions of such doctrine have been traced in the second century, and plainer indications in the writings of St. Augustine; and by the end of the sixth century we have the tenet clearly enunciated by St. Gregory:—"de quibusdam levibus culpis esse ante iudicium purgatorius ignis credendus est."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy vi. 16.      <sup>2</sup> Habakkuk i. 13.      <sup>3</sup> Philippians i. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm lxxxiv. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Dialogues*, iv. 39.

“We are bound to believe that for some less heinous sins there will be a purgatory of fire before the final judgment.”

Kindred opinions, whether the fire was supposed to be actual or metaphorical, were generally held through the mediæval period, the Schoolmen speculating widely concerning the state of the departed ; but not till the Council of Florence in 1439 was the doctrine authoritatively formulated, when the following definition was agreed to :—

“ If men have died truly penitent and in the love of God, but before they have made satisfaction for sins of omission and commission by worthy fruits of repentance, their souls are purified after death by the pains of purgatory ; and to the relief of those pains avail the prayers of the faithful, the sacrifices of masses, supplications, alms, and other offices of piety. The souls of those who die after baptism and without actual sin, and those which after contracting the stain of sin have been cleansed either in their bodies or after they have left them, are then received into heaven and have the vision of the Triune God, one more perfectly than another according to the diversity of their merits ; while the souls of others who die in mortal sin, or even in original sin only (i.e. the unbaptized), descend into hell, to be punished with unequal punishments.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Plumptre from Richard, *Anal. Concil.*, iv, p. 671 ; *The Spirits in Prison*, p. 300.

The Council of Florence, however, merely gave formal countenance and expression to what had for long been generally accepted and taught throughout the Western Church, and already the practical evils resulting from such doctrine were very patent.

These evils were principally two. In the first place the popular teaching led men to believe that a purgatory must be one of pain ; that, save for a small number of persons whose lives had been of the holiest, torments, which in intensity though not in duration might be equal to those of hell itself, awaited all ; and that none could hope to gain pardon and peace until he had by terrible suffering—inflicted, it was generally believed, by means of material flames—paid the penalty for his sins. As a result of this, there was a tendency to disregard the terrors of hell, and to allow the temporary punishment of purgatory to usurp in men's thoughts the place that should have been occupied by the fear of eternal condemnation.

In the second place there was a fatal application of worldly logic to the spiritual condition of the departed ; and it was argued that if prayer avails for the dead as well as the living, the application of prayer in sufficient quantity will end or at least shorten the period of purgatory which has been

appointed for any particular soul ; and therefore his deliverance may be accomplished by the repetition—either personally or by deputy—of so many prayers, or the offering of so many masses. It was a formal and coldly calculating estimate of the value of Christian ordinances, and it would naturally tend to encourage men to trust to the mechanical performance of religious services rather than to faith in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Thus the saving of souls from purgatory was often degraded into a business transaction, and the wealthy would manifestly enjoy an unequal advantage, having the means to found many chantries. Possibly the abnormally large number of daily masses for the dead that were offered in the larger churches may not have been commonly viewed as an abuse ; but the lives of many of the chantry priests were a manifest scandal—which need hardly be matter for surprise, for the saying of a “ missa pro defunctis ” each day, which was often their sole *raison d'être*, required neither learning nor ability, and must, with their freedom from restraint and their lack of official status, have left them idle for most of the day.

The other great blot that marred the system of the Church in the pre-Reformation period, and a more flagrant one than the erroneous teaching



concerning purgatory, was that connected with pardons or indulgences. Originally no doubt their issue had been innocent enough, and even helpful, when they were confined to the remission of ecclesiastical censures and penalties, which is the limitation to their use still observed by the Eastern Church to this day. But in the West their application has been extended, and during the Crusades the Popes of Rome offered indulgences as an inducement to men to take the cross and go to Palestine to fight against the Paynim, declaring that they were efficacious for the dead as well as for the living. From that time their use grew apace, and by the performance of acts of piety or devotion, or by the expenditure of money, definitely assessed advantages were believed to accrue for the benefit of souls in purgatory. Some instances are quoted by Wordsworth and Littlehales in *The Old Service-Books of the English Church*. One is an indulgence for repeating a form of devotion, applicable to souls in purgatory, and is mentioned in Caxton's *Fifteen Oos*, 1490-1491 :—

“ To every cristen creature able to receyve pardon, sayeng this antheme and colette folowyng wythin the chirche or chircheyrd, is graunted for every crysten creature there beryed XL. dayes of pardon, and XIII. lentes.”

Another from a document preserved in Lambeth Palace runs thus :—

“The hole indulgence of pardon graunted to blessed. S. Cornelis is .VI. score yeris .VI. score lentis .ii.M.ix.C and xx dais of pardon for evermore to endure.”

A third is on a memorial in Macclesfield Church, 1506, and asks for prayers for the deceased and his wife :—

“The pardon for saying of V. pater noster and V. aves and a cred is XXVI. thousand yeres and XXVI. dayes of pardon. Orate pro animabus, &c.”<sup>1</sup>

But indulgences were commonly of a less innocent nature than these. “Good works or penalties, the discipline of suffering, might be commuted for a money payment, just as in the Salic and other barbaric codes, from which this idea of commutation was probably derived, all crimes, of whatever nature, were punished by fines. To that point of degradation had the theology of the Western Church fallen in its commercial theory of satisfaction. The sale of pardons became the crying scandal of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, bringing in a treasure of a more palpable kind to the papal coffers, rousing the indignation of all who had

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 288, 289.

any clear vision left of true repentance or of true righteousness. The satires of Langland and of Chaucer, the protests of Wycliffe and Huss, all pointed to this as the crying evil of the time.”<sup>1</sup> The indignation of Luther was a righteous one, for the corruption was widespread and deep, and the very form in which Tetzel’s indulgences were expressed is sufficient to show that the Christian leaders of that age had departed very far from the teaching of Christ. Here is one of these documents :—

“ May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve thee through the merits of his most holy passion : and I by his authority, and that of his blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and our holy master the Pope, do absolve thee : first, from all ecclesiastical censures, however incurred ; secondly, from all sins, faults, and excesses hitherto committed by thee, however enormous, in so far as the keys of the holy mother church extend—remitting by plenary indulgence all punishments due to thee for the aforesaid in purgatory. And I restore to thee the sacraments of the Church, and [I restore thee] to the unity of the faithful, and to the innocence and purity conferred on thee at baptism ; so that the gates of punishment may be closed on thee at thy departure, and those of paradise opened. Or shouldst thou not

<sup>1</sup> Plumptre, p. 303.

presently die, let this grace remain in full force, and avail thee at the point of death. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

“Signed, J. B. Tetzel, Sub-Commissary.”<sup>1</sup>

Now it is quite evident that, with regard both to purgatory and to pardons, corruptions and abuse had been allowed to make so much headway that some reform was absolutely necessary, if the purity of the Christian Faith was to be restored. It is impossible to regard it as satisfactory that the relative importance of intercessions should be so seriously disregarded that out of some fifty masses celebrated each day in an English cathedral at least forty were *missæ pro defunctis*; and one wonders to what dimensions the conditions would have grown, if they had been permitted to continue unchecked to the present day.<sup>2</sup> And as for indulgences, so flagrant was the evil, that even the Church of Rome was constrained to set limitations to their scope in the middle of the sixteenth century; and though she still holds that they are efficacious for the benefit of souls in purgatory, at the Council of Trent she abolished the hawking of them by pardoners, and decreed that they were not to be used for the monetary enriching of the Church, nor

<sup>1</sup> Translated by the Reverend J. Lightfoot, in *Text-book of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England*, 1890, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Wordsworth and Littlehales, pp. 13-21.

were to be allowed to interfere with the exercise of the Church's discipline.<sup>1</sup>

In England these abuses had long been recognised as such, and had frequently been held up to ridicule by various writers or inveighed against by theologians of reforming tendency. Best known of all was Chaucer's portraiture of the typical pardoner in the *Prologue* of his *Canterbury Tales*, which represented him as a despicable person; and though the poet has only this little to say about his traffic in pardons :—

His walet lay byforn him in his lappe,  
Bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot ;<sup>2</sup>

his description in the section devoted to the 'Pardoner's Tale' of how a pardoner plied his trade is instructive reading indeed :—

If any of yow wol, of deuocioun,  
Offren, and han myn absolucioun,  
Cometh forth anon, and kneleth heer adoun,  
And mekely receyueth my pardoun :  
Or elles, taketh pardon as ye wende,  
Al newe and fresh, at euery myles ende,  
So that ye offren alwey newe and newe  
Nobles and pens, which that be gode and trewe.<sup>3</sup>

And he has a sly hit at the Chantry priests in his description of the Parson :—

<sup>1</sup> Plumptre, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> *Prologue*, 686-687.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidi*, 923-930.

He sette not his benefice to hyre,  
And leet his scheep encombred in the myre,  
And ran to Londone, unto seynte Poules,  
To seeken him a chaunterie for şoules.<sup>1</sup>

And here is Langland's account of a pardoner  
in his *Piers the Ploughman* :—

There preched a Pardonere ; as he a prest were,  
Brought forth a bulle ; with bishopes seles,  
And seide that hymself myghte assoilen hem alle,  
Of falshed, of fastyng, of vowes y-broken.<sup>2</sup>

The system of indulgences was subjected to scathing criticism by Wycliffe, who denounced it as a “ founed blasphemie blabred withouten ground,” and “ the lewedste heresie that ever was found of freres.”<sup>3</sup>

Later on we find so profound and so unbiassed a scholar as Thomas Gascoigne of Oxford complaining of the terrible effect wrought on English morality by the facility with which indulgences could be purchased. “ Sinners say nowadays, ‘ I do not care how many sins I may have committed in God's sight, for I can easily get at the very shortest notice a plenary remission of any fault and penance by indulgence granted by the pope, whose deed in writing to that effect I can have for

<sup>1</sup> *Prologue*, 507–510.

<sup>2</sup> I. 66–69.

<sup>3</sup> W. W. Capes, *History of the English Church*, 1900, p. 116.

a fourpence or a sixpence or a game of bowls.'"  
And he adds that people travelled about the country carrying baskets full of letters of indulgence, which they hawked to all who cared to buy.<sup>1</sup>

Divers English bishops did their best to expose the wrong that had grown out of the extension of the exercise of this power ; and of this they were well calculated to judge, for though they themselves were accustomed to issue indulgences, these merely remitted the penances imposed in this life by the Church's disciplinary system, and made no claim to affect the condition of souls beyond the grave. The University of Oxford, too, in its corporate capacity vented its opinion concerning the abuse in 1414, when in its proposals for reform it stated that "shameless collectors make simoniacal contracts for their offices, traffic in indulgences in the spirit of Gehazi, and waste in riotous living like the prodigal their illicit gains, dragging their victims down with them to hell." <sup>2</sup>

But the initial step that led to the taking of real action in the matter seems to have been the circulation of Simon Fish's *Supplication for the Beggars*, a sorry enough publication, scurrilous and untruthful, which proposed to confiscate the Church's endowments and to devote them to the

<sup>1</sup> Capes, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327.

relief of the then prevalent poverty. The work was published abroad, and was introduced into England in 1528; and so popular did it become, with its clever exposure of the common errors concerning purgatory and pardons, that Lord Chancellor Sir Thomas More felt himself impelled to write in reply *The Supplication of Souls*, in which he vindicated the claim of the souls in purgatory to the benefits to be derived from the endowments that had been given or bequeathed for their good.<sup>1</sup>

By such means the public mind was being gradually leavened and influenced, and the way was being prepared for reform; and the first enactment followed in 1536, when the *Ten Articles*, a sort of manual of religious instruction, were issued under royal authority and accepted by the Convocations. These reflect very plainly the doctrinal teaching of the Confession of Augsburg, and while favouring prayers for the dead, assayed to abolish the false teaching about purgatory and belief in the efficacy of indulgences for departed souls. It is therein very reasonably declared that it is "good and charitable to pray for the souls departed, which was said to have continued in the church from the beginning: and therefore the people were

<sup>1</sup> Jas. Gardner's edition, p. 125.



to be instructed, that it consisted well with the due order of charity to pray for them, and to make others pray for them, in masses and exequies, and to give alms for them to that end. But since the place they were in, and the pains they suffered, were uncertain by the Scriptures, we ought to remit them wholly to God's mercy : therefore all these abuses were to be put away, which, under the pretence of purgatory, had been advanced, as if the Pope's pardons did deliver souls out of it, or masses said in certain places, or before certain images, had such efficacy ; with other such-like abuses." <sup>1</sup>

The same teaching was next year put into more popular shape and set forth in more detailed form by being incorporated in a book, drawn up by a committee of divines and bearing the royal signature, which was entitled *The Institution of a Christian Man*.

The dissolution first of the lesser monasteries in 1536, and three years later of the greater houses, must have contributed considerable moral support to the movement of reform with regard to beliefs and practices concerning the departed, and must also have greatly curtailed the devotions offered on their behalf ; and an even more efficacious measure was the "Act for the dissolution of chantries,

<sup>1</sup> Burnet's *History of the Reformation*, vol. i, pt. i, p. 395.

hospitals, and free chapels," passed in 1545—an Act which was prompted as much by financial considerations as by religious, but which was none the less very effectual in reducing the devotions in honour of the departed.

It was in the middle of the sixteenth century that the doctrines of the Church of England in their present expression were formulated, and that her liturgical services were translated and remoulded to almost the form in which we now have them. It remains for us therefore to examine her official documents, in order to bring clearly to light her pronouncement on the important subject of prayers for the departed, including the developments connected with the terms purgatory and pardons. Such an examination must deal with the Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-nine Articles, the Books of the Homilies, and the Bidding Prayers.

First, we consider the several editions of the Book of Common Prayer.

In the 1549 Book the Prayer of Intercession in the Canon of the Mass, after commemorating "all thy saintes," and chiefly the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs, next proceeds to pray for the faithful departed :—

"We commend unto thy mercye (O Lorde) all

other thy servauntes, which are departed hence from us, with the signe of faith, and nowe do reste in the slepe of peace: Graunt unto them, we beseche thee, thy mercye, and everlasting peace, and that at the day of the generall resurrection, we and all they which bee of the misticall body of thy sonne, may altogether be set on his right hand, and heare that his most joyfull voyce: Come unto me, O ye that be blessed of my father, and possesse the kingdom, whiche is prepared for you, from the begynning of the worlde: Graunt this, O father, for Jesus Christes sake, our only mediatour and advocate."

In the Order for the Burial of the Dead the two first prayers contained these intercessions:—

(1) "That when the judgements shall come which thou hast commytted to thy welbeloved sonne, both this our brother, and we may be found acceptable in thy sight, and receive that blessing, whiche thy welbeloved sonne shall then pronounce to all that love and feare thee, saying: Come ye blessed children of my father: Receyve the kingdome prepared for you before the beginning of the worlde";

and (2) "Graunte we beseche thee, that at the daye of judgment his soule and all the soules of thy electe, departed out of this lyfe, may with us and we with them, fully receive thy promisses, and

be made perfite altogether thorow the glorious resurrection of thy sonne Jesus Christ our Lorde."

The Versicles and Responses included the following :—

"Entre not (o lorde) into judgment with thy servaunt : For in thy sight no living creature shal be justified. From the gates of hell : Deliver theyr soules, o lorde."

And the service concluded with this prayer :—

"Graunte unto this thy servaunt, that the sinnes whiche he committed in this world be not imputed unto him, but that he escaping the gates of hell and paynes of eternall derkenes : may ever dwel in the region of lighte, with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the place where is no wepyng, sorowe, nor heavinesse : and when that dredeful day of the generall resurreccion shall come, make him to ryse also with the just and righteous, and receive this bodie agayn to glory, then made pure and incorruptible, set him on the right hand of thy sonne Jesus Christ, emong thy holy and elect, that then he may heare with them these most swete and coumfortable wordes : Come to me ye blessed of my father, possesse the kingdome whiche hath bene prepared for you from the beginning of the worlde : Graunte thys we beseche thee, o mercifull fater : through Jesus Christe our mediatour and redemer."

There was furthermore provided "The Cele-

bracion of the holy communion when there is a burial of the dead," with introit (Psalm xlii), collect, epistle (1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18), and gospel (St. John vi. 37-40), the gist of the collect being this :—

" We mekely beseche thee (o father) to raise us from the death of sin, unto the life of righteousness, that when we shall departe this lyfe, we maye slepe in him (as our hope is this our brother doeth) and at the general resurreccion in the laste daie, bothe we and this oure brother departed, receivynge agayne oure bodies, and rising againe in thy moste gracious favoure: maye with all thine elect Saynctes, obtaine eternall joye." <sup>1</sup>

It is thus manifest that in the Prayer Book of 1549 the ancient and catholic custom of praying for the departed was fully recognised and encouraged; and though the ordination formula no longer expressly commissioned the priests to "offer for the quick and the dead," yet in fact the power was acknowledged, and those at rest were treated as still part of the Church, and as still capable of being benefited by the prayers of those yet alive.

In 1552 however all this was changed. In the Holy Communion the reference to the departed

<sup>1</sup> W. Pickering's *Reprint of the First Book of Edward VI.*

was entirely dropped, and as though to emphasize the omission this invitation was prefixed to the prayer:—"Let us pray for the whole state of Christes Church militant here in earth."

In the Burial Service the departed were no longer directly prayed for, but only by implication, the Versicles and Responses being omitted, and the three prayers reduced to two, their petitions being altered in the one to this form:—

"Beseeching thee that it maye please thee of thy gracious goodnesse, shortelye to accomplysse the noubre of thyne electe, and to haste thy kyngdome, that we wyth thys our brother, and all other departed in the true faythe of thy holye name, maye have oure perfecte consummacion and blysse, bothe in body and soule, in thy eternal and everlastyng glory";

and in the other to this form:—

"We mekely beseeche the (O Father) to rayse us from the death of synne, unto the lyfe of ryghteousnes, that when we shal depart this lyfe, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother doth, and that at the general resurreccion in the last day, we maye be founde acceptable in thy syghte, and receyve that blessing whiche thy welbeloved sonne shall then pronounce, to al that love and feare thee, saying, Come ye blessed

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children of my father, receyve the kingdome prepared for you, from the beginning of the world."

Also all provision for a celebration of the Holy Communion in connexion with a funeral was omitted in the newly-revised Book.

Herein we may trace the influence of foreign Protestantism—which was opposed to praying for the dead—an influence that made itself felt in England through Peter Martyr and Martin Bucer, who had been encouraged by Cranmer to take refuge in England, and in 1549 had been appointed to the Regius Professorships of Divinity at Oxford and Cambridge respectively. They were both consulted in the matter of Prayer Book revision, and the latter presented a lengthy and detailed review of the Book of 1549, a review that was afterwards approved by Martyr, and in which he expressed his objections to prayers for the departed.<sup>1</sup> Still the new Prayer Book contained no condemnation of the old usage, nothing, save its silence, that could be construed as disapproval; indeed the Act of Uniformity, which gave authority to the Book of 1552, so far defended the teaching and practices of the Book of 1549 as to state that the latter was "a very goodly order . . . agreeable to the word of God and the primitive Church, very

<sup>1</sup> Procter and Frere, pp. 71, 74.

comfortable to all good people desiring to live in Christian conversation, and most profitable to the estate of this realm.”<sup>1</sup>

As further testimony in the same direction, it may well be argued that the publication in 1559 of *The Primer* is proof that to pray for the departed was not regarded as banned by the Church of England. An edition of *The Primer* had been issued by Edward VI in 1553 as “a book of private prayer needful to be used of all faithful Christians, which book is authorized and set forth by the King’s Majesty to be taught, learned, read and used of all his loving subjects.” Unlike his, Queen Elizabeth’s *Primer* contained the Offices for the Dead, being in this respect modelled on King Henry’s *Primer* of 1545. Thus, early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, there was put into people’s hands a book of devotions, in which were printed most plain and unequivocal prayers for the departed. There were the old versicles and responses :—

“Lord, give thy people eternal rest : And light perpetual shine on them. From the gates of hell : Lord, deliver their souls.”

And the Offices closed with these three collects :—

<sup>1</sup> Gee and Hardy, *Documents Illustrative of English Church History*, p. 369.



(1) "O God, which by the mouth of St. Paul thine apostle hast taught us not to wail for them that sleep in Christ, grant, we beseech thee, that in the coming of thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ both we, and all other faithful people being departed, may be graciously brought unto the joys everlasting, which shalt come to judge the quick and dead, and the world by fire. Amen."

(2) "Almighty, eternal God, to whom there is never any prayer made without hope of mercy, be merciful to the souls of thy servants, being departed from this world in the confession of thy name, that they may be associate to the company of thy saints. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

(3) "Lord, bow thine ears unto our prayers, wherein we devoutly call upon thy mercy, that thou wilt bestow the souls of thy servants, which thou hast commanded to depart from this world, in the country of peace and rest, and cause them to be made partners with thy holy servants. Through Christ our Lord. Amen." <sup>1</sup>

In the same book the last of the collects at the conclusion of Lauds is this prayer for the Church :—

"Vouchsafe to grant unto the living mercy and peace, to the dead pardon and rest, to thy holy church peace and concord, and to us sinners life and joy everlasting." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Private Prayers, Queen Elizabeth, Parker Society*, pp. 59, 62, 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Again, in the following year, 1560, by royal letters patent was issued a Latin version of the *Book of Common Prayer*, which might be used in the Colleges and the Public Schools. In some respects it differed from the English edition, noticeably in appending certain additional forms at the end of the volume, viz., a Commemoration of Benefactors, and provision for a celebration of the Holy Communion at a funeral. The former includes a collect, which by implication, if not directly, prays for the dead :—

“Agimus tibi gratias pro fundatore nostro N. ceterisque benefactoribus nostris, quorum beneficiis hic ad pietatem et studia literarum alimur : rogantes, ut nos his donis ad tuam gloriam recte utentes, una cum illis ad resurrectionis gloriam immortalem perducamur.”

“We render our thanks to thee for N. our founder and our other benefactors, by whose generosity we are supported in this place for the encouragement of godliness and learning ; and we pray that we, rightly using their bounty to thy glory, may together with them be brought to the eternal glory of the resurrection.”

And the latter gives a collect, an epistle,<sup>1</sup> and a choice of gospels<sup>2</sup>—thus reviving the office of 1549—the collect containing this petition :—

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thessalonians iv. 13–18.

<sup>2</sup> St. John vi. 37–40 ; v. 24–29.

“ Ut cum ex hac vita emigramus, dormiamus cum Christo, quemadmodum speramus hunc fratrem nostrum, et in generali resurrectione, extremo die, nos una cum hoc fratre nostro resuscitati, et receptis corporibus, regnemus una tecum in vita æterna.”<sup>1</sup>

“ That when we depart this life, we may sleep with Christ, as our hope is this our brother doth ; and at the general resurrection at the last day we together with this our brother, being raised up, and receiving again our bodies, may reign with thee in life everlasting.”

*The Book of Common Prayer* suffered no more changes with regard to the matter in hand till the last revision in 1661, when two alterations are to be noted. First, there was added to the Prayer for the Church Militant a commemoration of the departed :—

“ And we also bless thy holy Name, for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear ; beseeching thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom.”

Now at first sight it may appear that this is no prayer for the dead, especially in face of the title of the prayer, which is one for “ the Church militant here in earth.” But two considerations must be

<sup>1</sup> *Liturgical Services, Queen Elizabeth, Parker Society*, pp. 432-434.

mentioned. One is this, that the wording of this clause seems to be borrowed from the Bidding Prayer, but with one significant alteration, viz., that the sentence, "that we may be partakers with them," is changed to, "that with them we may be partakers." It is difficult even to hazard any other explanation for the alteration than that it was desired to make the petition more directly a prayer for the departed. The other consideration is this, that among the revisionists there was a decided inclination to drop the phrase, "militant here in earth," and the attempt very nearly succeeded, the decision against the proposed change being apparently a concession to the Puritan party,<sup>1</sup> the other party having gained the larger point of the restoration of the commemoration of the departed.

The second alteration was one in the Burial Service. Here the wording of the first prayer in the Book of 1552—"that we with this our brother, and all other departed in the true faith of thy holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss"—was modified so as to read, "that we with all those that are departed in the true faith," &c. Possibly the object was to avoid appearing to express too great a certainty that the deceased

<sup>1</sup> *Church Quarterly Review*, vol. x, p. 23.

person—who might have led a notoriously evil life—would attain to perfect bliss in Christ's kingdom ; but anyhow the effect of the alteration is to leave it possible to interpret the clause either as a prayer for the departed, or as a prayer that the mourners may gain that blessedness which is assured to all the faithful departed.

We next turn to the Thirty-nine Articles. Here there is much to be gathered from a study of their history, chiefly in connexion with Article 22, which declares that “the Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons . . . is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.”

This Article as first published in 1553 spoke not of the “Romish Doctrine” (“*doctrina Romanensium*”) but of the “doctrine of school-authors” (“*doctrina scholasticorum*”) ; and the effect of the substitution in the Articles as issued in 1562 was to condemn the Roman Catholic teaching then in vogue, instead of the mediæval opinions which had been maintained by the Schoolmen of a past age. With their tenets, whether erroneous or justifiable, the Article has no concern ; nor does it presume to stigmatize as wrong all belief in either purgatory or pardons, but only that which was held by Roman Catholics

at the period when the Articles were agreed upon. In other words, what is here condemned is not the doctrine of either purgatory or pardons, but the abuse of the same ; and the errors that had grown up in connexion with both we have already endeavoured to appraise. The Church of Rome was aware of the abuse, and at the Council of Trent in 1563 made some attempt to curb excesses ; but she had no such strong desire for reform as the Church of England had shown in previous generations, a desire which she sought to strengthen and safeguard by formulating Article 22.

But more apposite is it to note that this Article is silent concerning the practice of praying for the departed. And this silence is specially eloquent, for in the original draft of the Articles as framed by Cranmer in 1551 there was also expressed condemnation "*de precatone pro defunctis*," and the Latin MS. is still extant bearing the signatures of the six royal chaplains who were charged by the king to consider the draft and to report on it. Those words however were struck out before the publication of the Articles in 1553, and we may indeed be thankful that the Church of England thus deliberately refused to condemn so ancient and catholic a usage as that of praying for the departed.

Of the Homilies there is only one that treats of the topic of prayers for the departed, and that is "The Sermon concerning Prayer," which is the seventh homily in the Second Book, published in 1563.

The usefulness of the Homilies for the instruction of the people was vouched for by No. 35 of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, which declares that "The second Book of Homilies . . . doth contain a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times, as doth the former Book of Homilies, . . . and therefore we judge them to be read in Churches by the ministers diligently and distinctly, that they may be understood by the people." This is, it must be allowed, moderately and cautiously expressed; and it is well that this is so, for the Homilies are not such as to be accepted as in themselves authoritative standards of doctrine: indeed there is no Churchman of any school of thought who would be prepared to pledge himself to every doctrinal statement therein set forth. This is usefully expressed by Dr. Gibson in his explanation of this Article:—

"The assent demanded to them [i.e. the Homilies] is of a very general character, and cannot be held to bind us to the acceptance of every statement made in them. Nothing whatever is said about the *historical* statements contained in them, some

of which are highly questionable, or even demonstrably false. As to the doctrine, all that is asserted is that they '*contain* a godly and wholesome doctrine' . . . A wide discretion is left to the individual, and he cannot fairly be called upon to maintain any particular view simply because it is taught in the Homilies. The formal doctrinal teaching of the Church of England is found in the Articles and the *Book of Common Prayer*; and so far as the Homilies agree with these, and bring out the sense of their teaching, they are authoritative. But that is all." <sup>1</sup>

Having premised this we now proceed to quote from the Homily :—

"Now to entreat of that question, whether we ought to pray for them that are departed out of this world, or no. Wherein if we will cleave only unto the word of God, then must we needs grant, that we have no commandment so to do. For the Scripture doth acknowledge but two places after this life, the one proper to the elect and blessed of God, the other to the reprobate and damned souls; as may be well gathered by the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Which place St. Augustine expounding saith on this wise :—' That which Abraham speaketh unto the rich man in Luke's Gospel, namely, that the just cannot go into those places where the wicked are tormented, what other

<sup>1</sup> Gibson's *Thirty-nine Articles*, pp. 726, 727.



things doth it signify but only this, that the just, by reason of God's judgment, which may not be revoked, can shew no deed of mercy in helping them which after this life are cast into prison *until they pay the uttermost farthing?* These words, as they confound the opinion of helping the dead by prayer, so do they clean confute and take away the vain error of purgatory, which is grounded upon this saying of the Gospel:—*Thou shalt not depart thence, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.* Now doth St. Augustine say, that those men which are cast into prison after this life on that condition may in no wise be holpen, though we would help them never so much. And why? Because the sentence of God is unchangeable, and cannot be revoked again. Therefore let us not deceive ourselves, thinking that either we may help other, or other may help us by their good and charitable prayers in time to come. For, as the Preacher saith, *when the tree falleth, whether it be toward the south, or toward the north, in what place soever the tree falleth there it lieth;* meaning thereby, that every mortal man dieth either in the state of salvation or damnation, according as the words of the Evangelist John do also plainly import, saying, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life; but he that believeth not on the Son shall never see life, but the wrath of God abideth upon him.* Where is then the third place, which they call purgatory? or where shall our prayers help and profit the

dead? St. Augustine doth only acknowledge two places after this life, heaven and hell. As for the third place, he doth plainly deny that there is any such to be found in all Scripture. Chrysostom likewise is of this mind, that, unless we wash away our sins in this present world, we shall find no comfort afterward. And St. Cyprian saith, that after death 'repentance and sorrow of pain shall be without fruit; weeping also shall be in vain, and prayer shall be to no purpose.' Therefore he counselleth all men to make provision for themselves while they may, because, 'when they are once departed out of this life, there is no place for repentance, nor yet for satisfaction.' Let these and such other places be sufficient to take away the gross error of purgatory out of our heads; neither let us dream any more that the souls of the dead are anything at all holpen by our prayers: but, as the Scripture teacheth us, let us think that the soul of man, passing out of the body, goeth straightways either to heaven or else to hell, whereof the one needeth no prayer, and the other is without redemption." <sup>1</sup>

Now in this Homily it is observable that there is no attempt made to prove, or even to state, that prayers for the departed are unlawful or contrary to the teaching of the Church of England; but it is merely contended that they are not enjoined in

<sup>1</sup> *The Two Books of Homilies*, Oxford, 1859, pp. 335-337.

the Bible, and that they are profitless because the departed are beyond the reach of prayers. But the contention here put forth by Bishop Jewel it is easy enough to confute ; for not only is his argument faulty and his representation of the opinions of the Fathers mistaken, but the whole is founded upon an unsound basis, viz., a denial of the intermediate state, belief in which state can be proved sufficiently clearly from the Scriptures, and has been constantly taught by the Church. It is therefore not to be wondered at that this attempt to discountenance the practice, standing alone as it does, should have failed in its purpose ; and that when a case was argued in the Arches Court of Canterbury in 1838, the Judge, who fully examined the evidence cited from the Homilies, ruled that prayers for the dead are not illegal, for they are not condemned by the Church of England.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, we must not omit to notice that there is another passage—in the second part of that very “Sermon concerning Prayer”—that touches on this same topic, and that without condemnation, but rather in tone of approval. The writer is arguing that it is erroneous to address

<sup>1</sup> *Case of Breeks v. Woolfrey*, quoted by F. G. Lee in *Prayer for the Departed*, pp. 341-355.

prayers to the departed, on the ground that they have no knowledge of the affairs of this world ; but he readily allows that in the early Church they were commemorated at the altar. As his authority he quotes St. Augustine of Hippo, who "hath this opinion of them ; that they know no more what we do on earth, than we know of what they do in heaven. For proof whereof, he allegeth the words of Esay the prophet, where it is said, Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel knoweth us not. His mind therefore is this, not that we should put any religion in worshipping of them, or praying unto them ; but that we should honour them by following their virtuous and godly life. For, as he witnesseth in another place, the martyrs, and holy men in times past, were wont after their death to be remembered and named of the priest at divine service ; but never to be invocated or called upon." <sup>1</sup>

Of prayers issued by authority to be used publicly before the preaching of sermons, the form used in the reign of Henry VIII (A.D. 1534) contained this injunction :—

"Ye shall pray for the souls that be departed, abiding the mercy of Almighty God, that it may please him the rather at the contemplation of

<sup>1</sup> *The Homilies*, S.P.C.K., p. 344.

our prayers, to grant them the fruition of his presence.”<sup>1</sup>

In the *Injunctions given by Edward VI* in 1547 this form was altered to the following :—

“ Ye shall pray for all them that be departed out of this world in the faith of Christ, that they with us, and we with them at the day of judgment, may rest both body and soul, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>2</sup>

This was modified in Queen Elizabeth’s *Injunctions* of 1559, the bidding concerning the dead being this :—

“ Finally, let us praise God for all those that are departed out of this life in the faith of Christ, and pray unto God, that we may have grace for to direct our lives after their good example, that after this life, we with them may be made partakers of the glorious resurrection in the life everlasting.”<sup>3</sup>

Such has ever since continued to be the authoritative form, being included in the *Canons* of 1604 (with the alteration of “ we with them,” &c., to “ we may be made partakers with them”).<sup>4</sup> As to whether the Bidding Prayer in its final shape

<sup>1</sup> Cardwell’s *Documentary Annals of the Church of England*, vol. i, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>4</sup> *The Prayer Book Dictionary*, p. 103.

may fairly be claimed as an instance of prayer for the departed, is matter of opinion ; but if it is so to be reckoned, it prays for them only by implication and not directly, and perhaps it is better to regard it as intended merely as a commemoration of the dead. Still even as such it is valuable as showing that in 1603 Convocation desired to give such prominence to this aspect of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints that they would have in frequent and regular public use a prayer with such a concluding petition as that quoted above.

This review of the whole situation as far as it concerns the Church of England leads us to these conclusions :—that a belief in purgatory is justifiable and right, and that pardons or indulgences were in their origin innocent and served a useful purpose, but that in the mediæval ages there were connected therewith gravely erroneous teaching and practical abuses which it was impossible to justify ; that the Church of England was determined to purge herself from these evils, and to effect such a reform that there should be no likelihood of their recrudescence ; that to this end some recasting of her forms of devotion, public and private, was necessary, and some new authoritative and binding statement with regard to doctrine and practice ; but that though in casting away what was corrupt she

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unhappily surrendered also much that was pure and helpful, yet, unlike the Protestant communions on the Continent, she was providentially restrained from condemning a usage that is scriptural, primitive, and catholic, and she still retains in her official statements sufficient evidence to show that she believes in prayers for the departed.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE RECOIL FROM MEDIÆVALISM IN ENGLAND.

IT is quite clear that the Church of England has never condemned prayers for the dead: she has never forbidden her living members to offer up their intercessions for those who are departed. True, she has reduced to a minimum the expression of such devotions in her public services provided in the *Book of Common Prayer*; but though pressed to do so, she has always refused to declare the practice wrong, whether by Articles or Rubrics or Canons or Declarations. The only seeming exception is that contained in the Homily on Prayer; but the Homilies cannot be regarded as containing a code of doctrine as held by the Church of England, for the sanction that they have received is but a general recommendation as a book of sermons useful to be read in church. And therefore, as already mentioned, the Court of Arches in 1838 decided that prayers might legally be inscribed on



tombs, inasmuch as "no authority or canon has been pointed out by which the practice of praying for the dead has been expressly prohibited."<sup>1</sup>

But with individual Churchmen the case is different. It was widely recognised that the abuses connected with the system of purgatory and pardons in the later middle ages were very real and very serious; and also the opposition to the Church of Rome, both as fostering erroneous religious teaching and practice, and as wielding a pernicious political power, was deeply rooted and strong. Blind partisanship, ignorant zeal, and even bigoted hatred were only too common; and many who, as preachers or writers or public controversialists, entered the arena as champions in defence of the English Church, included something that was good, or at least justifiable or innocent, in their sweeping denunciations of what was wrong and harmful; nor can we acquit the more violent of them from the charge of uncharitably inveighing against the religious beliefs and sacred usages of their fellow Christians with unrestrained and even coarse abuse and vituperation. Thus it was that prayers for the dead were rejected by many prominent theologians in England. In but few instances indeed do they really attempt

<sup>1</sup> Case of Brecks *v.* Woolfrey.

to deal at all fully with that subject itself ; but accepting the view adopted by Harding in his *Answer to Jewel's Apology*, that "Prayer for the dead presupposeth purgatory," they condemn both together, without caring to distinguish one from the other. Indeed we may well doubt whether anyone would have ventured to find fault with the offering of prayer or even of the mass for the departed, if there had been no cause to criticize the erroneous doctrines and practices concerning purgatory, or if the teaching of the Western Church on this whole subject had been as moderate as that of the East.

It is necessary to trace somewhat in detail this recoil from mediævalism, and we will therefore quote from a number of representative writers of the Reformation period passages that show their attitude towards prayers for the departed.

We begin our series with William Tyndale, who, though his expressions on the subject are not very definite, yet makes it evident that he attaches no virtue to masses for the dead or prayers for the dead. In his *Obedience of a Christian Man*, published in 1528, he writes thus concerning purgatory :—

"For some they pray daily, which gave them perpetuities, and yet make saints of them,

receiving offerings in their names, and teaching others to pray to them. None of them, also, which taketh upon them to save other with prayers, trusteth to be saved thereby themselves ; but hire other to pray for them."

And further on :—

"They build colleges, and make perpetuities, to be prayed for for ever ; and lade the lips of their beadmen, or chaplains, with so many masses, and diriges, and so long service, that I have known of some that have bid the devil take their founders' souls, for very impatency and weariness of so much painful labour."<sup>1</sup>

Here again are some words of his from the *Prologue to the Book of Leviticus* (1530) :—

"As for them that be dead, the sacrament of Christ's body and blood is as profitable unto them as is a candle in a lantern without light unto them that walk by the way in dark night. . . . And now their sinful members be dead, so that they can now sin no more ; wherefore it is unto them that be dead neither sacrament nor sacrifice. But under the pretence of their soul-health, it is a servant unto their spirituality's holy covetousness ; and an extortioner ; and a builder of abbeys, chauntries and cathedral churches, with false-gotten goods ; a pickpurse, a poller, and a bottom-

<sup>1</sup> Tyndale's *Doctrinal Treatises*, Parker Society, pp. 244, 331.

less bag. Some man would haply say, that the prayers of the mass help much, not the living only, but also the dead. . . . Howbeit it is not possible to bring me in belief that the prayer, which helpeth her own master unto no virtue, should purchase me the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>1</sup>

John Bale, afterwards Bishop of Ossory, in his *Examination of Anne Askewe* (1547), in violent language inveighs against private masses for the dead :—

“How such ware should help the souls departed, I cannot tell. . . . In the most popish time was never more horrible blasphemy than this is. This wickedness impugneth all the promises of God concerning faith and remission of sins.”<sup>2</sup>

In the works of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, there is but little evidence from which we may gather what were his own opinions concerning prayers for the dead. Perhaps his views shifted considerably, but all that we can be certain about is that at least in his earlier days he approved of such prayers, and afterwards he was opposed to such abuses as were connected with the system of chantries and chantry-priests. On the one hand not only the outline of the bidding-

<sup>1</sup> Tyndale's *Doctrinal Treatises*, Parker Society, pp. 424-425.

<sup>2</sup> *Select Works of Bishop Bale*, Parker Society, pp. 152-153.

prayer of 1534, but also the fuller form of 1547, both of which are attributed to Cranmer and have been quoted above (chapter x), fully recognise the legality and the correctness of offering public prayer for the departed. On the other hand, in his *Confutation of Unwritten Verities* (A.D. 1547), he speaks scornfully of "the sacrifice of the mass for the quick and the dead, and pardons to deliver dead men's souls from purgatory . . . and such other baggage."<sup>1</sup> And in his *Visitation Articles* issued to the clergy of his archdiocese in 1547 or 1548, occur these questions:—

"Item, Whether they have moved their parishioners, lying upon their death-beds, or at any other time, to bestow any part of their substance upon trentals, masses satisfactory, or any such blind devotions. Item, Whether they take any trentals or other masses satisfactory to say or sing for the quick or the dead."<sup>2</sup>

And further, his condemnation of purgatory in his *Answers to the Fifteen Articles of the Rebels, Devon*, A.D. 1549, is a very sweeping one, and seems to imply that he could see no benefit in any kind of devotions for the dead.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Works of Archbishop Cranmer*, Parker Society, vol. ii, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Cardwell's *Documentary Annals of the Church of England*, vol. i, pp. 47-48.

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, Parker Society, vol. ii, p. 181.

John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester, rigid puritan though he was, was strangely reticent concerning prayers for the dead; but that he was opposed to the practice may be inferred from his fifty *Articles concerning Christian Religion*, which he issued in 1551, requiring his clergy to subscribe to them. Of these the ninth runs as follows :—

“The doctrine of the Schoolmen of purgatory, pardons, prayers for them that are departed out of this world, the veneration, invocation, and worshipping of saints or images, is contrary and injurious to the honour of Christ our only Mediator and Redeemer, and also against the doctrine of the first and second commandment of God, contained in the first table.”<sup>1</sup>

It is not easy to understand how these terms of condemnation apply to the custom of praying for the departed; and it is noticeable that he does not explicitly denounce prayers for the dead but only the doctrine of the Schoolmen concerning such prayers; and further, it is still more remarkable that this particular is not mentioned again in his later very detailed Injunctions, Interrogatories, and Articles; so that we must infer that Bishop Hooper did not regard the practice

<sup>1</sup> *Later Writings of Bishop Hooper*, Parker Society, p. 121.

as specially harmful or prominent. However the one mention is sufficient to indicate his opinion on the subject.

The historian Strype reckons Latimer, Cranmer, Ridley, and Bradford as "four prime pillars of the reformed Church of England,"<sup>1</sup> and consequently the tenets of such a man as John Bradford, Prebendary of St. Paul's and Bishop Ridley's Chaplain, who was burnt to death in 1555, are to be regarded as of considerable importance; and his tenets included the rejection of any form of intercession for those who have passed from this life. His strong animus against all such devotions is made plain by a passage in *A Sermon of Repentance* preached in 1552:—"Prate the pope and his prelates as please them with their pardons, purgatory, purgations, placebos, trentals, diriges, works of supererogation, superabomination, &c."<sup>2</sup> In his *Confutation of Four Romish Doctrines* of A.D. 1554 he counts "praying for the dead" as one of those four,<sup>3</sup> and rejects it as being unscriptural and useless, concluding thus:—

"Though they be members of the same body mystical of Christ that we be of, yet should they

<sup>1</sup> *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, vol. iii, chap. i, pp. 363–364.

<sup>2</sup> *Writings of Bradford*, Parker Society, vol. i, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 271.

in this case be discerned from the militant members, they being at rest, and, having finished their course and fight, in no point needing any of our help, except we should too arrogantly set up our merits and prayers, and pull down Christ, as though we were able to get pardon and higher room in heaven for others; where all our righteousness and the best thing we do is so far from helping others, that thereby we cannot help ourselves, but had need to cry, *Dimitte nobis debita nostra.*"<sup>1</sup>

He allows that "the fathers from the beginning were accustomed to make memorials for the dead, as we do in our communion"; but he contends that these memorials or prayers were not petitions or intercessions, but rather "giving thanks to God for them," or at most the expression of "the desire of the more speedy coming of Christ, to hasten the resurrection."<sup>2</sup>

The opinions of Myles Coverdale, who was consecrated Bishop of Exeter in 1551 and died in 1569, are to be found chiefly in a controversial work, published in 1554, entitled *An Exhortation to the carrying of Christ's Cross*, which, although it seems to have come from the pen of John Bradford and is printed also among his works, was adopted

<sup>1</sup> *Writings of Bradford*, Parker Society, vol. i, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 291.



almost in its entirety by Coverdale, and therefore may be taken as representing his views. He is utterly opposed to prayers for the dead, considering them to be both vain and wrong. They are vain, because he cannot believe that any change in man's condition can be effected after the moment of his death—"as men die, so shall they arise: if in faith in the Lord, then need they no prayers: if in unbelief without the Lord, then are they past all help." And they are wrong, because "in holy scripture we find neither precept nor example of praying for any when they be departed this life"; so that "as prayer for the dead is not available or profitable to the dead, so it is of us not allowable, or to be exercised."<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Becon, Prebendary of Canterbury Cathedral, and formerly Chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer, in *The Sick Man's Salve* (A.D. 1561) thus scouts prayers for the dead as being papistical:—

"Whereas the papists heretofore have taught, for the maintenance of their idle bellies, that men's sins after their death be forgiven them through the sacrifice of that most wicked and abominable popish mass, and by pilgrimages-going, by trentals,

<sup>1</sup> Chap. 8, *Remains of Bishop Coverdale*, Parker Society, vol. ii, p. 258.

by diriges, by the good deeds of other, &c., it is a plain error, and against the word of God.”<sup>1</sup>

And in *Certain Articles of Christian Religion proved and confirmed* he maintains as the fourteenth article that “ the state of the dead is not such, that, whether they have lived godly or ungodly, they can be delivered either from their sins or from their pains by the popish masses, or by the good works of other.”<sup>2</sup>

The following quotation from a sermon preached at Paul’s Cross after the fire at St. Paul’s Cathedral in 1561, meagre as it is, is sufficiently plain to indicate the scorn that was entertained for masses for the dead by Bishop Pilkington of Durham. He is cavilling at a statement that St. James was Bishop of Jerusalem, and said mass there ; and he scoffingly inquires :—

“ I pray you what mass was it ? Began it with a great R. of *requiem*, or *scala cæli*, or *resurrexi*, for the plague, or murrain of beasts ? part of a trental, or for all Christian souls ? ”<sup>3</sup>

There are two places in the works of Edmund Grindal which deal with the custom of praying for the dead. The first is in his *Funeral Sermon for*

<sup>1</sup> *Works of Thomas Becon*, Parker Society, vol. iii, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 459.

<sup>3</sup> *Works of Bishop Pilkington*, Parker Society, p. 496.

*the Emperor Ferdinand*, preached in St. Paul's Cathedral in 1564, he being then Bishop of London. Here he attempts to meet the possible objection that in that funeral solemnity there "is no prayer for the soul of Ferdinandus." Such prayer, he argues, would have no countenance from the canonical Scriptures, and therefore would be wrong; and as for the example of the Fathers, "we must needs by their prayer understand either thanksgiving, or else take such petitions for the dead (as they be indeed in some places) for figures of eloquence and exornation of their style and oration, rather than necessary grounds of reason of any doctrine." Otherwise he must have recourse to another explanation—which indeed seems more plausible to him—"that those holy fathers meant nothing less than, by praying for those that were departed, to establish purgatory or third place; without the which, neither the pope himself nor any of his clergy would any thing at all contend for praying for the dead."<sup>1</sup>

Again in his *Injunctions* delivered to the Province of York in 1571, and in his *Visitation Articles* for the Province of Canterbury in 1576, Archbishop Grindal notices the practice, evidently in an unfavourable light. No. 76 of the former commands that there shall be

<sup>1</sup> *Remains of Archbishop Grindal*, Parker Society, pp. 23-25.

“At burials, no ringing any handbells ; no months minds, or yearly commemoration of the dead nor any other superstitious ceremonies to be observed or used, which tended either to the maintenance of prayer for the dead, or of the popish purgatory.”<sup>1</sup>

And the ninth Article of the latter contains this enquiry :—

“Whether on All Saints’ day after Evening Prayer there be any ringing at all, or any other superstitious ceremony used, tending to the maintenance of popish purgatory, or of prayer for the dead, and who they be that use the same.”<sup>2</sup>

Therefore Grindal must certainly be ranked among those who were opposed to praying for the departed.

John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, in 1565 published his *Reply to M. Harding’s Answer*, and in Article 18, entitled “Of receiving for others,” he touches briefly and disapprovingly on prayers for the dead. Here are his words :—

“This kind of prayer, although it be mere superstitious, and utterly without warrant of God’s word, yet I confess it was many wheres received and used, both in Gregory’s time and also long

<sup>1</sup> Cardwell’s *Documentary Annals of the Church of England*, vol. i, p. 336.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

before, and is avouched of Gregory by a number of vain and childish fables.”<sup>1</sup>

The testimony of James Calfhill, Prebendary of St. Paul's and afterwards Bishop-elect of Worcester, is contained in his *Answer to the Treatise of the Cross* (A.D. 1565). Therein he narrates a legend, erroneously attributed to Gregory the Great, who is represented as concluding :—

“By which thing it is shewed how much the Sacrifice of the holy oblation profiteth the souls ; when the spirits of the dead require this of the living, and shew signs whereby they may appear to be delivered by it.”

The story is a poor one, and Calfhill is at pains to belittle it, in order to maintain that it is “a pitiful case, that of so weak a ground so wicked a doctrine” as the benefit of a mass for the dead “should be builded, contrary to the manifest word of God.”<sup>2</sup>

Nothing very definite on the subject is to be found in the works of John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, who either had no strong convictions about the practice, or was cautious in expressing his opinion. This is seen in his *Defence of the Answer to the Admonition*, published in 1574,

<sup>1</sup> *Works of Bishop Jewel*, Parker Society, vol. ii, p. 743.

<sup>2</sup> Calfhill's *Answer to Martiall*, Parker Society, pp. 89-90.

when he was Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. Thomas Cartwright had maintained that in the Burial Service in the *Book of Common Prayer* "prayer for the dead is maintained"; to which Whitgift replied:—

"Whereas in times past the minister used to say mass and dirige for the souls of the dead, and sundry times move standers by to pray for the dead, at the time of burial; now doth he read most wholesome scriptures, declaring the misery of the life of man, the shortness of his days, the happiness of those that die in the Lord, and the certainty of the resurrection. And who can hereof gather any prayer for the dead?"<sup>1</sup>

But vague as this defence is, it looks as if Whitgift is rather to be ranked with the opponents than with the upholders of prayers for the dead.

William Fulke in 1577 wrote a treatise entitled *A Confutation of the popish churches doctrine concerning purgatory and prayers for the dead*.<sup>2</sup> And in 1580, when Master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in his *Overthrow of Stapleton's Fortress*, though allowing commemoration of saints to be right, as "we make it in our Communion," he was opposed to anything more than

<sup>1</sup> *Works of Archbishop Whitgift*, Parker Society, vol. iii, pp. 362-366.

<sup>2</sup> *Fulke's Defence*, Parker Society, p. vii.

that, and condemns as "one of the spots of that time" Ambrose's prayer that the soul of the Emperor Theodosius might have rest.<sup>1</sup>

Lastly we have William Whitaker, Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, writing thus in his *Disputation on the Holy Scriptures* in 1588 :—

"I have no doubt that, if the prayers of the living were so useful and salutary for the dead, scripture would have mentioned and even enjoined them."<sup>2</sup>

We have here, then, a considerable catena of quotations gathered from the works of prominent Churchmen, who all as individuals discountenanced the practice of offering prayers for the departed ; and though the names of some of those most eminent for life or learning are absent from the list, e.g., Archbishops Parker and Sandys, Bishops Latimer and Ridley, and Richard Hooker, yet doubtless the line could easily be continued by including puritan writers who came after, for they all probably adopted the same protestant standpoint. But as time elapsed, the excesses of reforming zeal became more restrained, acrimony was softened, exaggerations were lessened ; and, the flagrant evils incident to the mediæval teaching and practice concerning

<sup>1</sup> Fulke's *Answers*, Parker Society, pp. 87-88.

<sup>2</sup> Whitaker's *Disputation*, Parker Society, p. 596.

purgatory and pardons having disappeared, the fierce blaze of criticism and condemnation that had been brought to bear upon the subject of prayers for the dead gradually died away ; so that it became more easy to judge on its own merits a practice, which had been by so many indiscriminately swept aside as unworthy of serious consideration. No longer did such devotions figure as the subject of a controversy—they find no place in the Millenary Petition or the Hampton Court Conference ; and even in their fully detailed objections and grievances brought forward at the Savoy Conference in 1661, the puritan party do no more than express a desire that in the Order for the Burial of the Dead “ it may be expressed in a rubric, that the prayers and exhortations here used are not for the benefit of the dead, but only for the instruction and comfort of the living.”<sup>1</sup> It would seem indeed that the practice of praying for the dead was ever regarded with shyness and caution, as labouring under the suspicion of being necessarily connected with the “ Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory and Pardons ” ; but slowly and surely a truer estimate reasserted itself. Churchmen of light and learning broke away from the traditional opinions that had been handed down from the

<sup>1</sup> Cardwell's *Conferences on the Book of Common Prayer*, p. 332.



controversial writers of the Reformation period ; and the devout and Catholic-minded of the seventeenth century and succeeding generations began to reclaim their spiritual heritage by once more recognising those at rest as still being members of the Church, and as not outside the scope of prayer.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE PRACTICE OF ENGLISH CHURCHMEN (POST-REFORMATION).

THE number of those of the Reformation period and after who were opposed to praying for the departed was considerable—as we have shown in the preceding chapter—and the list includes some English Churchmen of front rank and great importance. But those of the contrary opinion were more numerous and more weighty—at least this was the case when the disturbing influences of the middle of the sixteenth century had passed away; and the leading divines and learned theologians of the seventeenth and succeeding centuries more than counterbalanced the teaching of those who had been moved by the recoil from mediævalism; so that we may truly say that the opposition nearly disappeared, and that Anglicanism, so far as it spoke on this topic, was fairly unanimous in its favour.

One of the most prominent Reformers may be

claimed as an advocate of prayers for the dead, viz., Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester, who was burnt to death at Oxford in 1555. Of course there is nothing surprising in the fact that as early as 1536 he closed a sermon preached before the Convocation of Canterbury with a bidding-prayer, in which he briefly linked together the faithful living and departed :—

“Ye shall pray for our most gracious sovereign Lord the king . . . for the Lady queen Jane, his most lawful wife, and for all his, whether they be of the clergy or laity, whether they be of the nobility, or else other his grace’s subjects, not forgetting those that being departed out of this transitory life, now sleep in the sleep of peace, and rest from their labours in quietness and in peaceable sleep, faithfully, lovingly, and patiently looking for that that they clearly shall see when God shall be so pleased. For all these, and for grace necessary, ye shall say unto God God’s prayer, *Pater noster*.”<sup>1</sup>

But it is remarkable that at a considerably later date, in another sermon preached before King Edward VI on Good Friday 1549, he again moves his audience to prayer after this tenor :—

“In this prayer I will desire you to remember the souls departed, with lauds and praise to Almighty

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons of Bishop Latimer*, Parker Society, p. 40.

God, and that he did vouchsafe to assist them at the hour of their death.”<sup>1</sup>

And later again, preaching at Stamford in 1550, he says thus :—

“ I commend unto you the souls departed this life in the faith of Christ, that ye remember to give laud, praise, and thanks to Almighty God for his great goodness and mercy shewed unto them in that great need and conflict against the devil and sin, and that gave them at the hour of death faith in his Son’s death and passion, whereby they might conquer and overcome and get the victory.”<sup>2</sup>

It is true that in a sermon delivered in Lincolnshire in 1552 Latimer expressed his disapproval of a superstitious sacrifice performed by Jews in the Maccabæan period :—

“ We read how that Judas Machabeus, that hearty captain, sendeth certain money to Jerusalem, to make a sacrifice for the dead. Now Judas did this ; but it followeth not, that we are bound in conscience to do the like, as the papists, which by and by conclude upon it :—‘ Judas did this, and he was a godly man ; therefore we should do it too, we should follow his example, and sacrifice for the dead.’ *Nego argumentum* : it is a naughty argument, to conclude upon that thing which he

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons of Bishop Latimer*, Parker Society, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

did devoutly, having not God's word, He did it, *ergo*, it was well done : for we are not bound to follow them in their doings." <sup>1</sup>

It is noteworthy however that though he does several times condemn the addressing of prayers to the saints, yet he nowhere has anything to say against praying on their behalf ; and the natural inference to be drawn from the evidence that we have leads us to conclude that he had always been accustomed to pray for the departed, and never abandoned his use, though not blind to possible abuses.

Dr. Field, who was Dean of Gloucester in the early years of the seventeenth century, was in favour of such devotions. His views on the subject are to be found in his famous work *Of the Church*, which was written with the aim of shewing to Papists and Puritans, more especially the former, that the Church of England has the notes of a true Church. He declares that in past ages "men prayed lawfully for the dead without any conceit of purgatory, namely, respectively to their passage hence and entrance into the other world ; and for their resurrection, public acquittal in the day of judgment, and perfect consummation and bliss." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons of Bishop Latimer*, Parker Society, p. 515.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix, pt. i, vol. iv, p. 330.

And again :—

“ Prayer for the resurrection, public acquittal in the day of judgment, and perfect consummation and bliss of them that are fallen asleep in the sleep of death, is an apostolic tradition, and so proved by the rule of St. Augustine, and that other added by me ; as likewise prayer made respectively to the passage hence, and entrance in the other world. But prayer to ease, mitigate, suspend, or wholly take away the pains of any of them that are in hell, or to deliver men out of the supposed purgatory of papists, hath no proof from either of these rules.” <sup>1</sup>

Here is the opinion of John Overall, Bishop of Lichfield and afterwards of Norwich (1614-19), expressed in a note on the first prayer in the Order for the Burial of the Dead :—

“ The Puritans think that here is prayer for the dead allowed and practised by the Church of England ; and so think I : but we are not both of one mind in censuring the Church for so doing. They say it is popish and superstitious ; I for my part esteem it pious and christian. The body lies dead in the grave, but by Christ’s power and God’s goodness shall men be raised up again ; and the benefit is so great, that sure it is worth the praying for : because then we may pray for what we ourselves or our deceased brethren as yet have not,

<sup>1</sup> Appendix, pt. i, vol. iv, p. 262.

therefore doth the Church pray for the *perfect consummation and bliss, both in soul and body*, to be given to our brethren departed. We believe the resurrection ; yet may pray for it as we do for *God's kingdom to come*. Besides, prayer for the dead cannot be denied but to have been universally used of all Christians in the ancientest and purest times of the Church, and by the Greek fathers, who never admitted any purgatory, no more than we do, and yet pray for the dead notwithstanding. What though their souls be in bliss already, they may have a greater degree of bliss by our prayers : and when their bodies come to be raised, and joined to their souls again, they shall be sure of a better state. Our prayers for them then will not be in vain, were it but for that alone.”<sup>1</sup>

In the *Private Devotions* of Bishop Andrewes (1555-1626) there are several passages that prove that he, the best and the most learned of his generation, habitually included the departed in his prayers. The following occurs among his “ Heads of Intercession ” :—

“ Let us pray to the Lord for the Creation, the human race, them that are fallen asleep, them that are still in the body, and them that are afflicted with sickness.”

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Wheatly's *Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 582, 583.

His "Office for Monday" includes this :—

"Let us ask of the Lord. . . . For those that are fallen asleep refreshment and light."

In that for Tuesday he prays for these :—

"Creatures—Men—those who have passed away before us, those who are still in the body, those who are compassed with infirmity."

On Wednesdays he thus intercedes :—

"Remember every Christian soul . . . granting Conversion to them that are gone astray, health to the sick, deliverance to the captives, and rest to them that are fallen asleep."

And his Saturday devotions include this petition :—

"Those who have gone to rest before us, our fathers and brethren, set them in the tabernacles of the just." <sup>1</sup>

And again in one of his later works, the *Answers to Cardinal Perron*, written about A.D. 1621, he makes this very plain statement of his belief :—

"The Sacrifice of Christ's death is available for present, absent, living, dead (yea, for them that are yet unborn). When we say the dead, we mean it is available for the Apostles, Martyrs, and

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Andrewes's *Private Devotions*, S.P.C.K., pp. 5, 55, 71, 84, 128.



Confessors, and all (because we are all members of one body) : these no man will deny.”<sup>1</sup>

In the writings of Archbishop Laud I find nothing of a positive nature, though the negative evidence is sufficient proof of his sympathetic attitude towards such devotions. This evidence is contained in the *Relation of the Conference between William Laud and Mr. Fisher the Jesuite*, the conference taking place in 1622, when Laud was Bishop of St. David's, and the narrative being printed by him as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1639. One topic under discussion was purgatory, and Laud complains that when Cardinal Bellarmine endeavoured to defend that doctrine by appealing to the Fathers, he confounded purgatory with prayers for the dead. Against the latter subject Laud has nothing to say ; and the fact that he pointedly puts it on one side, and confines his attack solely to the former, may be taken as proof that while he condemned belief in the one, he took the contrary view with regard to the other.<sup>2</sup>

About the same date James Ussher, then Bishop of Meath (1620-24), and afterwards Archbishop of Armagh, wrote his famous *Answer to a Challenge made by a Jesuit in Ireland*, wherein he devotes

<sup>1</sup> Edition of 1854, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Laud's *Works*, Anglo-Catholic Library, vol. ii, pp. 385-394.

the whole of a lengthy chapter to reasoning that prayer for the dead is right, on the ground that it has from the earliest times found a place in the devotions of the faithful.

John Bramhall, his contemporary, and for a short while his successor in the primacy, while Bishop of Derry in 1653, published his *Answer to the Epistle of M. de la Milletière*, who had in the form of a letter appealed to Charles II to become a Roman Catholic. Bramhall herein took occasion to defend the English faith against the attacks of Rome; and one of his contentions is that while his opponents couple together prayer for the dead and purgatory, as "if the one did necessarily suppose or imply the other," yet belief in purgatory is a novelty and is unwarrantable, whereas prayer for the dead cannot be condemned. And he continues:—

"Though the sins of the faithful be privately and particularly remitted at the day of death, yet the public promulgation of their pardon at the Day of Judgment is to come. Though their souls be always in an estate of blessedness, yet they want the consummation of this blessedness, extensively at least, until the body be re-united unto the soul; and (as it is piously and probably believed) intensively also,—that the soul hath not yet so

full and clear a vision of God, as it shall have hereafter. Then what forbids Christians to pray for this public acquittal, for this consummation of blessedness? ”<sup>1</sup>

Another contemporary was Anthony Sparrow, who in his *Rationale upon the Book of Common Prayer* (1657) gives a description of the Burial Service, which makes it clear that to pray for the departed is according to his mind. Here is an extract :—

“ Then follows a Lesson out of St. Paul to the same purpose ; then a Thanksgiving for that our brother’s safe delivery out of misery ; lastly a Prayer for his and our consummation in Glory, and joyfull Absolution at the last day.”<sup>2</sup>

Herbert Thorndike, Prebendary of Westminster, in his treatise *Of the Laws of the Church*, published in 1659, argues at considerable length on behalf of such prayers, of which he declares that “ it hath been a custom so general in the Church to pray for the dead, that no beginning of it can be assigned, no time, no part of the Church, where it was not used.”<sup>3</sup> And in his will (dated and proved 1672) he directs that there should be carved upon

<sup>1</sup> Bramhall’s *Works*, Anglo-Catholic Library, vol. i, pp. 59, 60.

<sup>2</sup> P. 353:

<sup>3</sup> Thorndike’s *Works*, Anglo-Catholic Library, vol. iv, pt. ii, p. 710.

his gravestone in the cloisters of the Abbey this petition :—

“ Tu, Lector, requiem ei et beatam in Christo Resurrectionem precare.”

“ Reader, pray that he may have rest and a blessed resurrection in Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

In the first series of his *Notes on the Book of Common Prayer*, John Cosin, who was Bishop of Durham from 1660 till 1672, has this explanatory comment on the Consecration Prayer in the Holy Communion :—

“ The Eucharist is a true, real, and efficient sacrifice, and . . . propitiatory for the sins of the whole world. And therefore in the oblation following we pray that it may prevail so with God, as that we and all the whole Church of Christ (which consists of more than those that are upon the earth) may receive the benefit of it.”

And on the phrase “ we and all thy whole Church ” in the Thanksgiving of the Post-Communion he declares :—

“ Here is a plain oblation of Christ’s death once offered, and a representative sacrifice of it, for the sins, and for the benefit, of the whole world, of the whole Church ; that both those which are here on earth, and those that rest in the sleep of peace,

<sup>1</sup> Thorndike’s *Works*, Anglo-Catholic Library, vol. vi, p. 143.

being departed in the faith of Christ, may find the effect and virtue of it.”<sup>1</sup>

This opinion, that in that Thanksgiving is included a prayer for the departed, he repeated in the second series of his *Notes* :—

“ By ‘ all the whole Church,’ is to be understood, as well those that have been heretofore, and those that shall be hereafter, as those that are now the present members of it. And hereupon my Lord of Winchester, Bishop Andrewes, grounded his answer to Cardinal Perron, when he said, ‘ We have and offer this sacrifice both for the living and the dead, as well for them that are absent, as those that be present.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Jeremy Taylor (1613–67) is a defender of the liberty of the Church of England in this matter, for in his *Dissuasive from Popery* (published in 1664), while arguing weightily against the Roman doctrine of purgatory, he declares that

“ it is true, the Fathers did pray for the dead ; but how ? That God should show them mercy, and hasten the resurrection, and give a blessed sentence in the great day. . . . Such general prayers for the dead as those above reckoned, the Church of England never did condemn by any express article, but left it in the middle ; and by her practice

<sup>1</sup> Cosin's *Works*, Anglo-Catholic Library, vol. v, pp. 107, 119.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

declares her faith of the resurrection of the dead, and her interest in the communion of saints, and that the saints departed are a portion of the Catholic Church, parts and members of the body of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

Edward Stillingfleet, Dean of St. Paul’s, and afterwards Bishop of Worcester, in his *Rational Account of the Grounds of Protestant Religion* (1665) has a chapter “Concerning Purgatory,” in which he clearly shows that he is opposed to the Roman view of purgatory, but accepts as right the ancient and primitive custom of praying for the departed.<sup>2</sup>

The epitaph of Isaac Barrow, Bishop of St. Asaph, who died in 1677, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, was placed in his own cathedral, bearing a petition on his behalf :—

“O vos transeuntes in Domum Domini, Domum Orationis, orate pro conservo vestro, ut inveniat requiem in die Domini.”

“O ye who enter the Lord’s house, which is the house of prayer, pray for your fellow-servant, that he may find rest in the day of the Lord.”<sup>3</sup>

It is evident that Dr. W. Nicholls recognised prayer for the dead as being right doctrinally,

<sup>1</sup> Part i, chap. 1, § 4.

<sup>2</sup> Part iii, chap. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Bishop Wilson’s *Works*, Anglo-Catholic Library, vol. v, p. 396.

for in his *Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer* (A.D. 1710) he remarks :—

“ Men are at liberty to hold it as a private theological opinion, without blame ; but they are not authorized to preach it to the people, there being no ground for it in Scripture, nor from the authentick books of our national Church.” <sup>1</sup>

A book of far-reaching and permanent influence, which is still regarded as a high authority in liturgiology, is Canon Charles Wheatly's *Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer*, first published in 1710. The author was clearly in favour of prayers for the departed, arguing at considerable length that the practice is of primitive origin, and scouting the idea that it necessarily involves a belief in purgatory.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time flourished the Reverend John Johnson, Vicar of Cranbrook in Kent, whose work on *The Unbloody Sacrifice and Altar*, issued in 1714, was counted worthy of being included in the Anglo-Catholic Library. Therein he speaks sympathetically of the view of the ancients that the Eucharist is to be regarded as a propitiatory sacrifice, including the dead as well as the living

<sup>1</sup> Wheatly, *Common Prayer*, p. 583, note.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 326–331, and 579–582.

in its scope ; and he quotes many of the Fathers as supporting that view.<sup>1</sup>

In his well-known *Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain*, which he brought out in 1721, the Non-Juror Jeremy Collier takes occasion of a comparison of the present *Book of Common Prayer* with that of 1549 to introduce a somewhat long argument in favour of the practice of praying for the departed, showing that it comes down from the early Church, and is sanctioned by the Church of England ; and such approval of his own Church he defends against the strictures of Bucer and other Protestant Reformers.<sup>2</sup>

That the saintly Thomas Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man (1697-1755), was in the habit of praying for departed friends is evident from his *Sacra Privata* and from the *Collectanea*—memoranda put together in his old age. In the former, headed by the text “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,” is a list of various persons with the dates of their decease, the list closing with the pious aspiration, “May the names of all these, O God, who died with the sign of faith, be found written in the Lamb’s Book of Life at the great day. Amen.” And the latter contains these more pointed prayers :—

<sup>1</sup> John Johnson’s *Works*, vol. i, pp. 387-389.

<sup>2</sup> Part ii, book iv, vol. v, pp. 280-286.



“Grant unto them, I beseech Thee, thy mercy and everlasting peace, and that at the great day I and they and all who are of the mystical Body of thy Son may be set on his right hand, and hear that his most joyful word, ‘Come, ye blessed,’ &c. Grant them peace in the mansions of the blessed, who are departed and are at rest in Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that the Reverend John Wesley was one who prayed for persons deceased—at least in his earlier years, when he was so true to all the *regimen* of the early Church. Speaking of this, his biographer, J. H. Overton, says thus :—

“It seems to me that it was during these years at Oxford (1720–1734) that the idea first gained a hold upon his mind which it never lost, of modelling all his doctrines and practice after that pattern (*viz.*, the Primitive Church). It is a far cry from Ritualism (so-called) to Methodism (so-called) ; but it is not fancy, but plain historical fact, that Wesley derived his ideas about the Mixed Chalice, Prayers for the Faithful Departed, and the observance of the Stations, from precisely the same source from whence he derived his ideas about the Class-meeting, the Love-feast, the Watch-night, and the tickets of membership ; and they date from this period.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Wilson's *Works*, Anglo-Catholic Library, vol. v, p. 278 ; vol. vii, p. 239.

<sup>2</sup> *John Wesley*, p. 30.

There is a passage in the *Life* of Dr. Samuel Johnson which informs us that he obeyed the natural promptings of his affection, and tentatively offered his intercession for his wife twelve months after her decease. It occurs in his "Prayers and Meditations," and runs as follows :—

"March 28, 1753. I kept this day as the anniversary of my Tetty's death, with prayer and tears in the morning. In the evening I prayed for her conditionally, if it were lawful." <sup>1</sup>

Very cautious was Reginald Heber, Bishop of Calcutta (1823–27), in dealing with this topic; but though he refused to dogmatize about it, he yet sets forth his own convictions with sufficient confidence and plainness :—

"I dare not counsel you (for it is a point on which I am extremely doubtful, and for which I confess I see no sufficient authority in Scripture). I dare not counsel you *pray* for the *dead*. This is, indeed, a practice sanctioned by the immemorial custom of the Jews, by that of the primitive Christians of at least the third century, and of many good men among the Protestants of later times; not on any notion of the pains of purgatory, but as believing that, till the day of Judgment, there might be still a possibility of the prayers of the living being of advantage to those whom they

<sup>1</sup> Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, vol. i, p. 214.

had lost. . . . I cannot think there is any crime in thus following that instinct of our nature, which leads us to clothe our wishes in the shape of *prayers*, and to ask of God in behalf of those we love, that he would give them what is best for their present condition.”<sup>1</sup>

It is quite certain that the Reverend John Keble set the highest value on such a pious custom, being fully assured that it was right in theory, and also helpful to the devotional life :—

“ The recovery of the practice of prayer for the departed, which had come with the study of the ancient Church, seemed to him to compensate for the trouble and annoyance of the times ; in 1837 he regrets the cessation of prayers for the Founders in the College chapels, ‘ nor do I think we shall ever be quite right till it is restored.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

And he sends to a correspondent a copy of a prayer, “ I believe from Bishop Andrewes, which one very unworthy person at least has used for years with greater comfort than he deserves,” the form being this :—

“ Remember thy servants and hand-maidens which have departed hence in the Lord, especially . . . and all others to whom our remembrance is due ; give them eternal rest and peace in thy

<sup>1</sup> *Life*, by his widow, vol. i, p. 555.

*John Keble*, by Dr. W. Lock, p. 218.

heavenly kingdom, and to us such a measure of Communion with them, as thou knowest to be best for us." <sup>1</sup>

Coming down to our own time, we may quote the moderate and well-balanced expression of Bishop Walsham How's views. Writing to a correspondent in July 1893, he says thus:—

"I am far from condemning prayer for the dead. If there be accessions of light and knowledge, and possibilities of growth and progress, after death, as surely we may believe, there seems nothing wrong in prayers for such blessings. Even forgiveness of sins, I think may be prayed for, if we once allow that prayer for pardon can prevail at all (in life-time, I mean). I know some hold that prayer for another's pardon can only mean for the other's repentance as a condition of pardon. But I think St. James's words must mean more than this. Then, if sin is forgiven at all upon the prayer of another, I see no real ground for drawing an arbitrary line at death. But I prefer the cautious and self-restrained practice of the primitive Church. It seems to have been quite a recognised practice among the Jews to pray for the dead, and the early Christians did not discontinue it, but prayed for 'light, and peace, and a blessed resurrection' for their dear ones departed. . . . I have since always prayed in the words I have quoted. You may

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, pp. 45-46.

like to know the actual words I use daily:—  
'Into the hands of thy fatherly goodness I commend my dear ones at rest, humbly beseeching thee that they may be precious in thy sight. Grant them light, and peace, and a blessed resurrection.' " <sup>1</sup>

This catena of authorities could be considerably extended, for we might cite many other typical English Churchmen who have been quoted in illustration of the wide acceptance of the ancient custom of including the departed within the scope of prayer. In the seventeenth century we may name Joseph Mede, the Cambridge scholar; Dr. Henry Hammond, Archdeacon of Chichester and Canon of Christ Church; Gilbert Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury; Peter Gunning, Bishop of Ely; the saintly Bishop Ken; and Richard Baxter, author of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*. These are succeeded in the next century by George Bull, Bishop of St. David's; the non-juring Dr. George Hickes; Archbishop King of Dublin; and the Hon. Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham. While among those of the nineteenth century may be instanced Dr. J. M. Neale, Dr. Pusey, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Dr. Routh of Magdalen, Oxford, Dr. Liddon, Archbishop Magee, and Lord Tennyson (*The Passing of Arthur*). But we close our list

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir* by F. D. How, pp. 465-466.

of quotations with referring to two churchmen of the highest rank of all, who furthermore have been regarded, apart from their mere official position, as foremost leaders in religious thought and life—the last two Archbishops of Canterbury. Of these the one—Archbishop Benson—has left us a beautiful series of prayers on behalf of the departed, used in his private devotions. Of Archbishop Temple we have a weighty pronouncement in favour of such prayers, delivered entirely on his own initiative upon a most public and important occasion.

The following are collected from Archbishop Benson's *Prayers Public and Private* (edited by the Reverend Hugh Benson) :—

Ναί, Κύριε, καὶ ἀνάπαυσον τὸν Μαρτίνόν μου ἐν τότῳ φωτείνῳ ὅπου ἐπισκοπεῖ τὸ φῶς τοῦ προσώπου σου, ἔνθα ἀπέδρα λύπη καὶ στεναγμός.<sup>1</sup>

“Yea, Lord, give rest too to my Martin in a place of light, where he may behold the light of thy countenance, whence sorrow and sighing have fled away.”

The reference here is to his eldest son Martin White Benson, who died in College at Winchester in 1877. This is from his “Bede Roll” :—

“Fideles Defuncti.—Remember, O Lord, for

<sup>1</sup> P. 169.

good the souls of thy servants . . . and of all the faithful that have entered into the Tabernacles of Rest : and of thy mercy refresh them in thy light against the day of thy coming ; through, &c.”<sup>1</sup>

There is also this prayer, “daily to be recited by me as Prebendary of Heydour cum Walton in the Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lincoln for the health and rest of our Benefactors” :—

“ . . . We humbly beseech thee that those for whom we have determined to offer our prayers, both those whom this world yet holdeth in the flesh, and those already unclothed of the body, whom the world to come hath received, may by thy goodness and mercy be counted worthy to attain pardon of all their sins, and eternal joys, through our Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

And here is a more particular intercession entitled “For the faithful Departed” :—

“Remember, O Lord, all those [. . . of the sacerdotal order and those of the laics . . .] who are already at rest ; grant rest to their souls in the bosom of our holy fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; gather them together in a green pasture, and lead them forth beside the waters of comfort in a paradise far from all grief, sorrow, and mourning, in the glorious light of thy Saints.”

<sup>1</sup> P. 214.

<sup>2</sup> P. 223.

This he followed by "The Diptychs of the Dead read here," and by a longer prayer from the Liturgy of Severus, Patriarch of Antioch.<sup>1</sup>

Prayers for the Dead formed one of the subjects chosen by Archbishop Temple to be treated of in his Charge delivered at his First Visitation of his archdiocese of Canterbury in 1898, when he spoke of that topic in his own cathedral as follows :—

"They are in God's hands ; but it is possible that he may allow our prayers to help them, and we cannot point out any evil that is likely to come from such prayers, provided only that we do not allow ourselves to be led into adopting dreams and fictions concerning their condition. We do not know, we cannot know, for God has not told us, what is happening to them in that other world ; and we have no right to set up inventions of our own, and adapt our worship to such inventions. What they may need, in order to be fitted for the final entrance into perfect happiness, we cannot tell. We are told that there will be at the last day some whose work will be burned, but who nevertheless will themselves be saved ; and we see men die who seem to be forgiven, but nevertheless are so full of imperfections that we can hardly believe them as yet fit for Heaven. They are not sanctified. They have not that holiness without which no man can see the Lord. We have no right to invent

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 227-228.



accounts of the way by which they may be purified. We know that they will be changed when the Lord comes ; but the nature, the manner, and the process of that change is not made known. To pray for the dead is not forbidden by the New Testament, and it is not forbidden by the Church of England, and our Ecclesiastical Courts accordingly have so decided it. But while the Church of England nowhere forbids prayers for the departed, it nevertheless does not authorize the introduction of such prayers into our public worship except in the most cautious and guarded manner. In our public worship we pray for ourselves, that we ' with all those that are departed in the true faith of God's holy name may have perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul in God's eternal and everlasting glory.' This is the model which we are bound to follow in our public worship. We ought to confine ourselves within the limits here indicated ; for where we know so little it is a duty of reverence to let our words be few, lest perchance there may be something said which is inconsistent with that which God is doing, lest perchance we may be pretending to understand what is altogether hidden ; lest perchance we induce others, in following our example, to be incautious, and to step beyond the limits which ought to confine all approaches to the very presence of God. In our private prayers there is nothing in the Church of England teaching to forbid our prayers for those whom we love, and

who are gone before us ; but in our public worship there is need of that kind of reverence which restrains the language and which perpetually acknowledges our own ignorance—our ignorance both as to what is happening in the world of spirits, and our ignorance of how God will bring to a completion the work which he has begun in Christian souls.”

Lastly, indications are not wanting to show that prayers for the departed are gradually and surely finding a place again in the public services of the Church. The “Russian Contakion of the Departed” was sung at the funeral of Prince Henry of Battenberg at Windsor Castle in 1896, and at that of Archdeacon Denison in St. Paul’s Cathedral in the same year, and since then has been used at the obsequies of even more important personages. Its opening words are these :—“Give rest, O Christ, to thy servant with thy Saints : where sorrow and pain are no more ; neither sighing, but life everlasting.”<sup>1</sup>

Then in 1900 there were issued by authority special forms of prayer concerning the South African War for public use throughout the English Church on Septuagesima Sunday, and in Form V the following petition occurred :—

<sup>1</sup> *The English Hymnal*, no. 744.

“For all those who have fallen in the true faith of thy holy Name, that they with us may enter into the rest which thou hast prepared for them that believe in thee.”

In a special form of service sanctioned by the present Lord Bishop of London, who himself officiated, for the dedication of a memorial reredos erected in a London church, this prayer was offered for the departed :—

“Grant him, O Lord, thou lover of men, with all thy servants departed this life, refreshment, light and peace in the land of the living, in thy kingdom, whence sorrow, pain and sighing are banished, and where the light of thy countenance evermore shineth.”

Other English bishops have freely sanctioned similar prayers for public use in their dioceses, and furthermore have formally approved the adoption of hymn-books containing the most plain recognition of the practice of praying for the departed, e.g., *Hymns Ancient and Modern, Complete Edition* (see nos. 398, 481), *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 1904 (see nos. 302, 304, 305, 640), and *The English Hymnal* (see nos. 282, 350, 351, 352, 353, 356, 358, 359, 360, 655, 743, 744).

And, most remarkable of all examples, because of the prominence of the occasion and the wide extent of their use, were the *Special Forms of*

*Service in commemoration of his late Majesty King Edward VII, to be used in all churches and chapels in England and Wales on the day of the funeral, or on the most convenient day within the Octave.*

Therein provision was made for a special celebration of Holy Communion, the Collect being that from the Burial Office, adapted for the occasion, and the Epistle (1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18) and Gospel (St. John vi. 37-40) those from the old service-books (Form I); there was the prayer "Grant to us, O Lord, together with all thy faithful departed, rest and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Form II), and the pious aspiration "May the Lord of his mercy grant to us, with all the faithful departed, rest and peace" (Form III); while the Versicles and Responses included this direct intercession:—

"Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord: For in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

From all this wealth of evidence we can hardly be mistaken in inferring that English Churchmen are now recovering from the rude shock that was experienced by the devotional life of the nation in the sixteenth century, when the recoil from the errors of mediævalism carried away, together with the evils, so much that was helpful and good. The

learned and the devout of the Church of England are now grasping the meaning of "I believe in the communion of saints." They are realizing the truth that it cannot be harmful or wrong to pray for those who, though departed, are still members of the Church; but rather that if prayer ever has availing power, it is not only "a holy and good thought" to pray for the dead, but it is also beneficial for them to have the Church's intercessions offered for their rest and peace in the present, and for their pardon at the last day. Until recently the recognition of prayers for the departed has been, with few exceptions, such as Bidding Prayers, confined chiefly to private devotions; but we find that now, as ignorance and prejudice are alike losing their power, there is a strong and growing desire that such prayers should no longer be veiled in ambiguous form in our *Book of Common Prayer*, but that in the public services of our Church, especially in the Holy Communion and in the Order of the Burial of the Dead, we should be helped and encouraged to offer our intercessions for our dear ones in Paradise.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE ATTITUDE OF PROTESTANTISM.

THE first Christian teacher (with the sole exception of Aërius) to raise his voice against the generally received practice of praying for the departed was John Calvin; and although the topic cannot be said to figure prominently in the records of his life or in his extant writings, yet he is sufficiently emphatic in his denunciations of such prayers, which he regarded as mistaken and useless. He deals with the subject more fully than elsewhere in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*,<sup>1</sup> which was published in 1536. Here he argues that the offering of prayers for the dead arises from a natural instinct of affection, which seeks solace for its sorrow, and feels prompted to manifest its love. But he traces to heathen sources the custom of thus paying regard to the memory of the departed, the Christian rites being merely a base imitation of the heathen ones, for it is impossible to find any sanction for

<sup>1</sup> Bk. iii, chap. 10, § 10.

such in either the Old or the New Testament ; and as for patristic authority, he claims that he could by quotations from ancient writers “ overturn prayers for the dead.”<sup>1</sup> Arguments such as these— if indeed they can be dignified by such an appellation—carry but little conviction ; and of still less weight are his poor quibbles, written some years later in his tract on “ The true method of giving peace to Christendom and reforming the Church.”<sup>2</sup> But they are enough to show Calvin’s own opinion ; and from him, the ablest and the most influential of the Reformers, most of the others drew their inspiration, so that a refusal to countenance prayers for the departed soon became a general mark of Protestantism.

Luther too had little to say concerning this topic, and what he did say was couched in very hesitating and cautious expression, being evidently not himself in favour of such prayers, but finding himself unable to forbid them altogether. His chief passage in this connexion is that in his *Church Postil or Confession on the Lord’s Supper* :—

“ For the dead, inasmuch as the Scripture says nothing about them, I hold that it is no sin to pray somewhat on this wise in private devotion (for

<sup>1</sup> H. Beveridge’s translation, vol. ii, pp. 248–251.

<sup>2</sup> Calvin’s *Tracts*, vol. iii, pp. 321–325.

my friends), 'Dear God, if the souls can be helped, be merciful to them.' And when this has been done once or twice, let that be enough. For vigils and soul-masses and year's minds are of no use, but are an invention of the devil." <sup>1</sup>

In his *Sermon on the New Testament* in 1523 and in other of his works he seems inclined to view them rather more favourably, but he gave no real encouragement to the practice; and the condemnations of purgatory, from which the sixteenth century theologians found it so difficult to dissociate prayers for the departed, would naturally include them too under their ban. <sup>2</sup>

The same lukewarm allowance appears in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, the work of Melanchthon, published in 1531, which is generally acknowledged as an authoritative statement of Lutheran belief, and which in Article 12, "Of Repentance and Of Confession and Satisfaction," has this brief notice :—

"Now, as touching the fact that our opponents, with respect to intercession for the dead, appeal to the Fathers, we know, indeed, that the ancients spoke of prayers for the dead such as we do not forbid." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Lutheran Cyclopedia*, Jacobs and Haas, 1899, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, and Dahle, *Life after Death*, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20, and Dahle, p. 216.



A few years later (1536) we find the *Order of Hanover* declaring, concerning prayers for the departed :—

“It is a fine ancient custom, but must be done rightly. We must not first offer for their sins, but should give thanks for the One Sacrifice which all of us enjoy in this life and after this life.”<sup>1</sup>

We may also quote Zwingli, who expresses himself in much the same tenor in the 90th of his *Articles*, which he put on paper in preparation for the Disputation at Zurich in 1523 :—

“If anyone concerned for the dead calls on God to show them mercy, I do not consider that so objectionable ; but to set a time for the punishment (seven years for a mortal sin), and for the sake of gaining your end lie about it, is not human, it is devilish.”<sup>2</sup>

Bullinger would appear to have been in entire agreement with Calvin's condemnation of the practice : indeed his eschatological views would hardly afford any scope for prayers for the dead. This is made evident in the *Second Helvetic Confession*, composed by him in 1562, which contains in the 26th chapter this article of faith :—

“We believe that the faithful depart from their

<sup>1</sup> *Lutheran Cyclopaedia*, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> *Huldreich Zwingli*, by S. M. Jackson, 1901, p. 185.

bodily death at once to Christ, and therefore have no need of the suffrages or prayers or good offices of the living. We believe also that unbelievers are cast down at once into Hell, from whence there is no escape for the wicked through any good offices of the living.”<sup>1</sup>

That *Second Helvetic Confession* is accepted as of paramount authority by the Calvinists, and naturally has in large measure helped to colour the tenets and doctrinal statements of the various Protestant Communions, which have generally regarded praying for the dead as one of the inherent differences that distinguish them from Catholic Christendom.<sup>2</sup> Bishop Dahle indeed shows that purgatory was what they specially objected to, in comparison with which the other was regarded as comparatively unimportant :—

“The Reformers distinctly rejected the doctrine of purgatory ; they did not so distinctly denounce intercession for the dead. The reason may be that this idea was of much older origin than the other, that it was regarded as in comparison practically harmless, and that it was considered only as an immediate expression of the feelings of

<sup>1</sup> *Catholic Eschatology and Universalism*, by H. N. Oxenham, 2nd edition, 1878, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 210, 211.

affection towards the dead. They were satisfied when they got masses for the soul abolished.”<sup>1</sup>

An inquiry recently addressed to the various Protestant bodies in this land, asking what is “the attitude of each towards praying for the departed—whether such teaching and practice have been condemned, or sanctioned, or are simply passed over in silence,” has elicited the interesting information that while such prayers are not as a rule approved—being mostly regarded with marked disfavour—yet there has been no formal condemnation by any denomination except the Presbyterians, who are theoretically bound to endorse the Westminster Confession of 1646, which enacts that “prayer is to be made for things lawful, and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter; but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death.”<sup>2</sup> And there is even a serious difference of opinion among Presbyterians themselves as to whether they are committed to accept every detail of that Confession, their scholarly members finding themselves unable to shut their eyes to the fact that the rejection of prayers for the dead is based on an unscriptural and unsound

<sup>1</sup> *Life after Death*, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 21, sec. 4.

denial of any intermediate state—for chapter 32 declares that “besides these two places (viz., heaven and hell) for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.”

The testimony referred to, which was supplied by first authorities of the various denominations, is as follows.

The Reverend Dr. J. S. Simon, Principal of the Didsbury Wesleyan Methodist Theological College, Manchester, who is recognised as the leading authority on the Methodist Constitution, writes thus :—

“It is difficult to answer questions concerning ‘attitude’; but, judging from my own experience, I should say that Wesleyan Methodists, in general, would look upon praying for the departed with uncompromising hostility. I am now in the fiftieth year of my ministry, and have not yet met a Methodist who expressed himself in favour of the practice.”

Of the United Methodist Church the Reverend Dr. George Packer, Secretary of the General Connexional Committee, writes to say :—

“I am not aware that the teaching and practice have been condemned. I can, however, say that they have not been sanctioned. The matter has been passed over in silence for the simple reason

that throughout the Church there is no inclination or disposition towards the practice."

The Secretary of the Primitive Methodists, Professor A. S. Peake, sends this account of the matter as it concerns his denomination :—

"So far as I know the practice of prayer for the dead has no place whatever in Methodism. I do not now recall any definite pronouncement upon the subject. So far as the impenitent dead are concerned the tendency of Methodism has been to regard their fate as fixed at death, to reject strongly all idea of purgatory and of prayer for the dead as implying such a doctrine. The idea that prayer might be offered for those who were not regarded as lost with a view to their progress in spiritual experience has not, I imagine, been before the mind of those who have taken this position. For them I think prayer for the dead has always had the suggestion of prayer designed to produce a radical change in state. I have consulted Pope's *Compendium*, but the particular point he seems not to discuss, though he quite sets aside all idea of purgatory. The Primitive Methodists have the same doctrinal standards as the Wesleysans. Their articles of belief consist of eleven brief statements, of which the last is 'The General Judgment and Eternal Rewards and Punishments.' I do not know that there is anything actually to forbid prayer for the dead. But I am not aware that

among the Primitive Methodists the question has ever come up for formal discussion and authoritative statement."

And that the topic is regarded as outside the range of practical consideration in the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Connexion is clear from the letter of the Reverend Owen Prys, Principal of the Theological College at Aberystwyth :—

"The question of praying for the departed never arises in our Church. It would be difficult to conceive anybody raising the question at all. If by any chance it were raised it would be instantly condemned. So far as I know there is no interest taken in the question by the members of our Church. It is regarded as a 'popish' doctrine and is given no further thought."

From the Methodist bodies we turn to the Independents or Congregationalists, together with the small Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, which is now practically, though not by origin, an offshoot of that large and influential sect. In both of them the doctrinal position is singularly lacking in definition and safeguard; there has been no pronouncement on such subjects as purgatory, the intermediate state, and praying for the departed; but these and other matters are left entirely in the discretion of each minister and congregation, who

are at liberty to adopt or reject them, as they please. This is the statement of the Reverend R. J. Wells, Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales :—

“ The Congregational Churches, while disallowing the utility of creeds and articles of religion as a bond of union, and protesting against subscription to any human formularies as a term of communion, yet declare their adherence to the great evangelical verities. Upon minor points of doctrine and practice, they, differing among themselves, allow to each other the right to form an unbiassed judgment of the Word of God. Taking as we do this position I cannot gauge or state the attitude of the Denomination on the subject you refer to. Speaking unofficially I should say it would be difficult to find any amongst us who either teach or practise that concerning which you ask.”

And Mr. E. Dolby, Secretary of the Trustees of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, writes :—

“ The teaching and practice of the Connexion is contrary to the sanctioning of prayers for the departed. It is in every church condemned.”

The Baptists are similar to the Congregationalists as regards organization, each congregation being untrammelled, and each minister being free to inculcate or to condemn the doctrine of the intermediate state and the practice of praying for the

departed, provided only that there is no serious opposition from his congregation, whose spokesmen are the deacons. An inquiry addressed to the Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, the Reverend J. H. Shakespeare, brought this answer :—

“The question has not in any public manner been raised among us. There is no authoritative declaration to which appeal can be made. If the question were raised, my impression is, that while individuals here and there might favour the practice, Baptists as a body would condemn it. The general attitude would be distinctly adverse. You may accept this as certain.”

The Presbyterians are chiefly represented by the Church of Scotland (Established), by the United Free Church of Scotland, and by the Presbyterian Church of England, between which there is no difference in matters of faith, and which are all similarly situated as regards doctrinal legislation.

The attitude of the first is thus set forth by the Principal Clerk, the Very Reverend David Paul :—

“Praying for the dead is forbidden by the *Confession of Faith* of the Church of Scotland, chap. xxi, sect. 4. I quote the section :—‘Prayer is to be made for things lawful, and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter ; but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they



have sinned the sin unto death.' The Confession is an authoritative document, and I am not aware that the feeling or attitude of the Church of Scotland is opposed to that part of it which I have quoted."

Dr. James Cooper, however, who is one of the most prominent and influential divines of the Church of Scotland, deals with the subject more fully, making it evident that although no official sanction has been accorded to the practice, yet praying for the dead has certainly won its way to recognition in the Established Church. He writes :—

"The *Confession of Faith* (Westminster Assembly of Divines) is the public and avowed standard of all the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, though liberty 'in matters not entering into the substance of the Faith' is allowed both in the Church of Scotland and in the United Free Church. The smaller Presbyterian bodies are still very rigid. The Confession lays down that 'prayer is to be made for . . . all men, but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned unto death.' The latter clause is a rigorous reading of St. John's well-known saying. The former is based on a repudiation of the Romish purgatory, on the ground which Bishop Bull (*vide Corruptions of the Church of Rome*) objects to it—as affording sinners, whom a faithful warning about hell might have converted, a false hope of

getting a second chance after death. So far as Prayers for the Dead rest on the belief in the Romish purgatory, we, like Bishop Bull, reject them. And I suppose the great majority both of our clergy and people do not use them at all, because they think that all prayers for the dead imply that they are in purgatory. And if they are in heaven (such people ask), do they need to be prayed for? It is over thirty years since I preached (on the text 'Thy kingdom come') that, as this includes the hastening of the kingdom of glory, in which the faithful departed shall not miss their part, it involves prayer for them. And thanksgivings for the Blessed Dead, including prayers for their full consummation and bliss at the resurrection, have for more than that time been published in the (Church of Scotland's) Church Service Society's *Euchologion*. At the First Conference of the Scottish Church Society (1893) the late Dr. John Macleod of Govan, the late Dr. Hamilton of Hamilton, and I, spoke openly of such prayers being laudable and right. It made some sensation at the time, but none of us was questioned (even) in the Church Courts, and none of us ever withdrew what we said. R.I.P. may be seen on not a few tombstones of Scottish Presbyterian Ministers of the Church of Scotland; and I believe a great many people use in private devotion prayers of that kind; while the thankful commemoration of departed saints forms part, in one form or another, of all our Com-

munion services ; and both the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church have ' sanctioned ' such hymns as Archbishop Maclagan's ' It is finished, Blessed Jesus,' and ' Now the labourer's task is o'er '—which more than *glance* at the doctrine which underlies the practice. I published a sermon on ' The Blessed Dead, and their Remembrance in Prayer by the Church on Earth.' But it is out of print."

From Mr. A. Henderson, Senior Principal Clerk of the United Free Church of Scotland, there comes this statement :—

" The answer to your question will be found in the *Confession of Faith* prepared at Westminster, which is the Confession of the Presbyterian Churches generally. There, chap. xxi, sect. 4, it is said :— ' Prayer is to be made for things lawful, and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter, but not for the dead,' &c. Prayer for the dead is also, inferentially, excluded by chap. xxxii, which speaks of the state of men after death, and expressly—after saying that the souls of the righteous immediately, on death, are received into the highest heaven, and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell—adds, ' Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.' I have not at hand the changes made by various branches of the Presbyterian Church ; but I do not know of any Presbyterian

Church which has modified its adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith on *this* subject."

And Dr. John Skinner, Principal of Westminster College at Cambridge, writes as follows :—

"It is not easy to say what the attitude of the Presbyterian Church of England is towards prayers for the dead, as the question has never been raised amongst us in any form that called for authoritative decision. The confessional position of the Church is, of course, decidedly hostile to the practice, see *Westminster Confession*, chap. xxi, sect. 4 :—' Prayer is to be made . . . for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter ; but not for the dead. . . . ' It is understood, however, with us that subscription to the *Confession* only implies assent to the substance of the faith therein contained ; and what belongs to the substance of the faith at any given time has to be determined by the action of the Courts of the Church. In regard to this question no occasion has arisen to call for a deliverance. So far as my knowledge extends, I should say that the subject excites little interest among our people, and I have rarely heard it discussed. My impression is that we adhere pretty strongly to the Reformation doctrine, partly from traditional associations, and partly from a feeling that such matters are too high for us to understand. At the same time, if the question were raised, I doubt if a minister

would be condemned for heresy on account of his holding the opposite view."

The Reformed Episcopal Church adopts without alteration the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and also—though with some modifications of an anti-sacerdotal character—the *Book of Common Prayer*, and considers the doctrinal standard therein set forth as sufficient, without further addition or definition. Apparently a very small insertion in the first of the deprecations in the Litany—"Remember not *upon us*, O Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers"—was intended to limit the scope of the prayer; but that the question is left open is clear from the statement of Bishop Philip X. Eldridge:—

"The Reformed Episcopal Church has neither formally condemned, nor sanctioned, the teaching and practice of praying for the departed. The necessity for any action in the matter has never arisen in this Church. At the same time our formularies and doctrinal standards give no support to prayers for the dead."

The views of the Free Church of England are probably the same as those of the Reformed Episcopal Church, the General Secretary, the Reverend W. E. Young, writing thus:—

"The custom (of praying for the departed) is not

sanctioned, and such teaching and practice in any Church connected with our body would most certainly not be 'passed over in silence' by Convocation."

Lastly, Mr. Isaac Sharp, Secretary of the Society of Friends, thus describes the attitude of that body :—

"I do not know of any pronouncement made by the Society of Friends as such either for or against prayers for the dead. I do not remember ever hearing the subject considered at all by Friends as a body, and I do not think it is a question that as a body we are likely at all to consider, though I can well understand the interest that many individuals might take in it."

On the Continent there are not wanting indications that modern Protestantism is not altogether content that so ancient and so reasonable a practice should be entirely neglected. Hagenbach's *History of Doctrines* (translated by Dr. Plumptre) states that "the practical question has recently revived, how far prayers for the dead are admissible in the Reformed Churches;"<sup>1</sup> while "a modern German theologian complains that the denial of purgatory and the omission of prayer for the dead has brought

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iii, p. 387; see A. A. Leibrand's *Das Gebet für die Todten*, Stuttg., 1864, which takes a favourable view; and Stirn's *Darf man für die Verstorbenen beten.*, *Jahrbb. für d. Theol.*, 1861, ii. s. 278 ff.

the people to the brink of doubt about eternal life altogether.”<sup>1</sup>

From all this evidence we are justified in drawing these conclusions :—(1) Speaking generally, Protestants are averse to the practice of praying for the departed. They are but little influenced by the sentiment or the authority that Catholics connect with what is very ancient in Christianity; but rather they attach greater weight to the opinions of such Reformers as Calvin and Bullinger—especially the former—and together with them have been misled by their exaggerated fear of what is Roman Catholic to abjure what they erroneously believed was connected therewith. (2) With the exception of Calvinists on the Continent, and possibly—their case is disputed and open to doubt—of Presbyterians at home, Protestants are technically and constitutionally free in this matter. Confessedly their traditional practice and teaching are such as to discountenance prayers for the dead; but while on the one hand such prayers have not been sanctioned, neither have they been condemned; their ecclesiastical legislation has passed them over in silence, either as a matter that does not call for a decision, or as one that is better left open; so that, as the case stands at present,

<sup>1</sup> Neumann in *Zeitschrift für Luther. Theologie*, 1852, p. 282.

their ministers are not liable, without fresh enactments, to be condemned for bringing the subject forward in public, nor their members for praying for their deceased friends in their own devotions.

(3) The progress of the study of theology, and the fuller appreciation of Biblical and doctrinal and historical truths, have not only tended to diminish prejudice and error, but have also already begun to dispose men more favourably to such a topic as this; and we may confidently anticipate that in the future Protestantism will gradually incline more favourably to this Christian usage, and in the course of time will be at one with Catholicism in valuing and using intercession for the departed.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND THE FUTURE.

THERE is no denying the fact that the Church of England was for a considerable period generally ranked with Protestantism. Although she never accepted for herself the title Protestant, yet she was commonly regarded as such both by friends and by foes, and was even so described by members of her own communion. It was therefore not unnatural that she should to some extent view religion in a Protestant way, and that her theological opinions and her religious observances should be coloured by Protestant thought and practice ; and this, as we have seen, has been largely the case with regard to prayers for the dead.

But though it is possible, as has been shown in a previous chapter, to compile a considerable list of English divines of the Reformation period and after, who have expressed their rejection of the practice of offering intercession for the departed, it is very important that we should estimate such

evidence at no more than its proper value. There is a very real and a very great difference between the opinions of an individual Churchman—or even of a number of such, however exalted their position may be—and the authoritative doctrines of the body of which those individuals are only members. And though it is indeed true that not a few English bishops and clergy have chosen to dissent from the teaching and practice of former ages, yet it must be allowed that their personal views, whether private or published, in no way bind their fellow Churchmen, or compromise the Church of England ; for their utterances did not even profess to be more than opinions, and the Church has never accepted or endorsed those opinions. The Church of England has never claimed for herself an independent existence ; she has never asserted a pretension to be regarded as the Church ; but in her authoritative documents she figures rather as a part of the whole, a branch of the Catholic Church—a National Church indeed, but fully recognising that as the English nation is only a portion of the world, so the English Church is only a portion of Christendom. This is set forth on the title-page of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and in the Prefaces and the Creeds and the prayers and the Articles of Religion. And although she asserts her

authority as a National Church to "ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority," yet the fact remains that she has never exercised such power for the condemning of these devotions. Nor indeed could the Church of England justify herself in rejecting such intercession, unless she were to withdraw her high claims to catholicity; for even if it be allowed that the offering of masses or prayers for the dead may be included in the category of "ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority," yet behind the "ceremonies or rites" there is the teaching of the whole Church concerning the state of the departed and our relation to them—teaching common to every branch of the Church and to every age; and no Christian body that appeals to Catholic tradition, as does the Church of England, could afford to endanger its position by setting at defiance so sure an example of the Vincentian canon of "*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.*"

During the last two or three generations however a change has been surely and steadily going on. The great Church revival of the nineteenth century has, amongst its other effects, promoted the recognition of the departed as being yet members of the Church, and has greatly increased the practice

of including them in private intercessions ; and the influence of such a society as the Guild of All Souls has been considerable, having as its main object "intercessory prayer for the repose of the souls of deceased members and all the faithful departed," and encouraging the performance of public services on their behalf. While the sanction extended by the highest authorities in Church and State to such services—especially the conceding of the principle of a mass for the dead on the day of the funeral of King Edward VII—and the changes in the Burial Service proposed by the Convocations of Canterbury and York, are clear indications that a more generous recognition of the practical outcome of the doctrine of "the communion of saints" is being demanded by English Churchmen, and that that demand is being met. And very remarkable is it to find that some leading Churchmen, who are widely known as Evangelicals, and would not hesitate so to describe themselves, are advocates of praying for the departed.

For several years past the revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* has been under discussion, and many and various suggestions have been put forth for its improvement ; but we could wish that the proposals of the Revision Committee had taken even a bolder line than they have done with regard

to the matter in hand. For to us no revision will give satisfaction unless it includes this three-fold restoration of the ancient and pious custom of praying for the departed :—(1) a commemoration of the dead with a definite intercession in the Canon of the Mass at every celebration of the Holy Communion ; (2) the provision of a Mass for the dead for use at funerals or anniversaries, or on any other occasion when it may be desired and deemed advisable ; and (3) the inclusion of an Order for the Burial of the Dead, which shall be primarily an office for the dead, and not, as is our present form, a service for the consolation of the funeral party.

When the Church of England sees fit to do this, she will be responding to the yearnings of the hearts of many of the most loyal and most devout of her sons and daughters ; she will roll away a reproach that has for long been laid against her Prayer Book ; and she will again bring herself into full accord with the rest of Catholic Christendom in respect of the primitive and general custom of praying for the dead.

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